ZENOBIA'S SUITORS

BY MRS. SOUTHWORTH

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Sequel to "Sweet Love's Atonement"

By

MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

AUTHOR OF

"A Noble Lord," "The Lost Heir," "Her Mother's Secret,"
"Love's Bitterest Cup," "A Beautiful Fiend,"
"Victor's Triumph," Etc.

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ZENOBIA'S SUITORS

CHAPTER I.

ZENOBIA'S NEW HOME.

Immediately after the dinner following the funeral of Mrs. Horah, Col. Pryor, Noll, Jemima and Zenobia prepared to return to The Notches. Their luggage had been sent on an hour before, in charge of Servia, in the farm wagon driven by old Si. The carriage stood before the hall door. It was The Notches' carryall, with Tim on the box.

The departing set, overcoated, cloaked and shawled, stood grouped around Gilbert Godfrey, whom, now at the last moment of leave-taking they felt sorry to desert in the great, gloomy old house.

"Poor Gilbert! Oh, old fellow, how I wish you were going with us!" exclaimed Oliver.

"But my post of duty is here, my dear boy," replied the young man, with a smile.

"It is very rough on you. You will be very lonesome," persisted Oliver.

Godfrey only shrugged his shoulders.

"And the sun going down, and the dark winter night coming on, too," added Oliver.

Neither Col. Pryor nor the girls made any remark, but the latter looked so sadly sympathetic, not to say tragic, that Oliver, with an impulse of generosity that,

under the circumstances, really approached magnanimity, suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh, I say! Look here, now! I can't be a beast! I won't leave you alone here to-night! Not the first night, you know!" And as he spoke he began to divest himself of his overcoat.

"No necessity for that, my dear boy," began Godfrey, in a grateful, but deprecating, tone.

Oliver interrupted him:

"No necessity to you, maybe, but a great necessity to me! I won't leave you alone this first night, I tell you! So there! What are you going to do about it?" And with these words he went and hung up his overcoat on the hallrack, as if to settle the question.

"I think Noll is right. You had better accept his company," said Col. Pryor.

Godfrey bowed to the colonel in acknowledgment of his kind suggestion, and then, turning with a grateful and affectionate smile to Oliver, took his hand in a cordial grasp.

"Come, my dears, we must be going," exclaimed the colonel, winding his woolen scarf around his throat.

The girls hastily tied their veils over their hats and held out their hands to take leave of the young men. But the latter put on their hats to see them to the carriage, and help them into their seats. Then came the last leave-taking, and the carriage rolled away.

It was a long, cold drive through the mountain passes that wound through the ridge that separated Horah Hall from The Notches, but they arrived safely at about eight o'clock. The night was very dark, but the front of the house was lighted up, and a ruddy glow came through the crimson curtains of the windows whose shutters had been left open as if in welcome to the returning master and his party.

At the first sound of the carriage wheels, and before Tim could draw up his horses, little Otto, the depre-

ciated, ran to open the hall door and hurry down the steps, and as the carriage stopped, held up his little hand to help his adored Miss Jim to alight.

"Ah, my brave, little page, is it you?" cried Jemima, as she gave the child her hand and sprang down.

Col. Pryor followed with Zenobia, while Tim turned the horses' heads and drove to the stable.

The party entered the hall, where they were received by Aunt Druse, who, with a courtesy, said:

"De tea will be ready ter put on de table in 'bout quart'n 'our, young ladies; but ef yer would rudder go ter yer rooms fus', yer'll find a good, warm fire dere in bofe ob dem. An' dey's bofe fixed up fer yer 'cordin' ter ole marse's destructions."

"We will go upstairs first and take off our wraps in our rooms—eh, Zenobia? What do you say?" inquired Jemima.

"Yes, please," replied the girl.

Jemima led the way to the second story, to the front room on the right hand, which had been nicely fitted up for the accommodation of Zenobia. There was a bright, wood fire burning in the open fireplace, with a rug laid down before the hearth, and a large easy-chair and a foot rest placed beside it.

Servia was standing at the chimney corner, with her head leaning against the mantel, but she changed her position immediately, and came forward to meet her young lady and help to relieve her of her heavy wraps.

The room, though warm, cheerful and comfortable, yet had that chilly aspect so common to most of the bedchambers of the country and period; bare, white-washed walls; bare, polished floors; windows, bed, dressing table and resting-chair, all draped in white dimity.

Before Zenobia could sink into the inviting seat beside the fire, Jemima called to her:

"Come, Queen Zenobia! Come, my love and beauty!

Come and see what your two slaves, old Nat and young Noll, have done for you! How they have studied your sweet majesty's comfort and convenience!"

At any other time Zenobia might have smiled at the quaint humor with which Jemima tried to rouse her from her despair. But her bereavement was too recent, her heart wounds too fresh. She rose and followed Jemima to the door at the back of the chamber, which opened into another room.

"See!" said Jemima, "when Uncle Nat decided that you should have this room, as the very best in the house, he turned himself out of this back one to give it up to me, so that we might have communicating apartments, and come and go to each other at any moment."

"How very kind! But you know it hurts me to think that he should give up his own room," sighed Zenobia.

"Fiddle-de-dee, my dear! It was a pleasure to him to do it. And he got a much better one, the front one, corresponding to yours, on the opposite side of the hall. Nor is that the only result of his thoughtfulness for you. Come this way," continued Jemima, and she led Zenobia back across her chamber to a side door near the front window, and opened it into a little bedroom at the end of the hall.

"There!" she continued, "what do you think of that? Uncle Nat turned Noll out of that little snuggery to give it up to Servia, so that she also should be at your beck and call at any hour of the day or night!"

"Oh, Jemima, it is too much! It oppresses me! It overwhelms me!" said Zenobia, in real distress.

"What nonsense! You know that Noll would take the greatest delight in anything he could do for you!"

"But to give up his room!"

"Bosh! He has a better one, also; the back one on the other side of the hall, corresponding with mine, and communicating with his dad's. So you see every-

thing is just as it should be, for everybody's comfort and convenience! And you, Queen Zenobia, have your lady-in-waiting in one adjoining apartment, and your chambermaid in another: both within call! And now let us go downstairs, for tea must be ready."

Zenobia, with her heart overflowing with love and gratitude, followed her friend down to the old parlor, where they found the tea tables set out with all the best china and plate, and laden with all the dainties possible for the season and proper to the hour.

Col. Pryor was standing with his back to the fire on the old faded Turkish rug.

"Welcome, my second daughter!" he said, coming forward, taking her hand and drawing her toward him, and just touching her brow with his lips.

"Yes! I will be your daughter henceforth! The only father I ever knew!" replied the girl, while tears filled her eyes, and a rising sob nearly choked her voice.

Jemima joined them at the fireside. He gave a hand to each, and, drawing them together, said:

"It is one of the dearest wishes of my heart that you two may be sisters in affection toward one another, and daughters in love toward me."

Zenobia lifted his hand to her heart, and pressed it there, in silent adoration; but Jemima jumped up, threw her arms around his neck, and kissed him at least a dozen times.

"Your dear, impulsive, extravagant mother over again, Jim! But I like you the better for it, my dear," he said, as he laughingly released himself at the moment when Aunt Druse appeared with the tea, followed by Otto with the waffles.

Such was Zenobia's introduction to her new home at The Notches.

And now began for her a life of peace that gradually brightened into one of happiness, as time and faith soothed the sorrow of her bereavement. But, ah! this

season was all too brief! It was only the deceiving calm that precedes the bursting storm.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE THE STORM.

Though Gilbert Godfrey's residence was at Horah Hall, yet every leisure hour he could command was spent at The Notches, where Jemima was the chief attraction, and where Col. Pryor and all his family made him cordially welcome. Oliver was especially pleased with his presence, as it left himself more at liberty to devote his attention to Zenobia.

So far the course of true love did "run smooth" with these young people. And if they were not radiantly happy, it was only because they could not yet cease to feel acutely at times the loss of their dear friend.

Old Dr. Bland, of Mistyrock, often joined the family circle in the evenings. He was a widower, with two daughters, married long before and now living with their large families on farms in the neighborhood. The doctor himself kept house alone in the village, and divided his time between his studies and his practice.

This practice was very extensive as to space, very numerous as to patients; but, alas! very limited as to compensation; unless—as the good old doctor did—we consider the satisfaction to be derived from curing the sick, relieving the suffering, or soothing the dying, the best of all rewards! But for this he would have lived the life of a student hermit. He had one old negro man-servant, who had grown up with him from boyhood, who now took care of his horse and his garden. This man's wife kept house and did all the indoor work. They had no children, and all their affections were lavished on each other and on their master.

It was quite a new departure for Dr. Bland to get into the habit of coming two or three times a week to spend an evening at The Notches, but the secret of his action lay in this: that he had discovered in young Gilbert Godfrey the most congenial companion he had ever met in his long and varied experience. His friendship with Nathaniel Pryor was founded on old acquaintance and mutual esteem, but he had never found in the good colonel the intellectual sympathy he was sure he should enjoy with young Godfrey.

His attention was first drawn to the young man by the skill, judgment and self-possession he had shown in treating Mrs. Horah in the emergency of her alarming hemorrhage in the absence of her physician. Since that day he had improved his acquaintance with him, had studied his character and aspirations, and his circumstances. And all he learned of him had increased his regard for Godfrey. Having ascertained that the young man had had nearly a three years' course of studies in the medical department of the University of Virginia, his own *alma mater,* and would have graduated in another year but for the family misfortunes that recalled him home, he resolved to ask him, so soon as he should be free from his responsibilities at Horah Hall, to come and take a place in his own office as his assistant until the medical classes of the new term should open, and then to go and finish his course and take his degree. After which, should nothing better offer, he might return to Mistyrock as his assistant, and in time become the successor of the old physician.

Dr. Bland brooded over this project for a long time before he mentioned it, watching his young favorite the while, and the more he discovered the better he approved of him. But it was very difficult to find an opportunity of speaking to Godfrey confidentially.

At The Notches the family circle was remarkably

social; always gathered in the evening around the great, open, wood fire in the long parlor, the two girls in their busy idleness of fancy needlework, the colonel with his brierwood pipe, to which no one objected, Oliver doing a little wood carving, which was lately his hobby, and Godfrey doing nothing in particular, unless it was to hold a hank of silk for one of the girls to wind; but all conversing with mutual interest that never flagged. Sometimes they would engage in a round game of cards. At other times, as the old piano had been repaired and tuned for the use of Jemima, they would form a family concert in which everyone joined. Indeed, whatever pastime occupied their evenings included the whole domestic circle. Into this evening circle would often appear the figure of the old doctor, always a welcome and benignant presence.

Dr. Bland was about sixty years of age, and looked seventy. He was of medium height, and slender form. He had a finely shaped head, a fair, thin face, delicate features, large, thoughtful, gray eyes, a bald forehead, and soft, silvery, white hair and beard. His dress was rusty black, careless, and even shabby, but his linen, in strong contrast, was daintily fresh and white. His whole presence was delicate, intellectual, refined.

Whenever he came to The Notches in the evening, the colonel was always delighted to see him, yet had no mind to have his "turtle doves," as he facetiously called the young lovers, disturbed by the presence of a visitor. So he usually challenged his friend to a rubber of "old sledge," which the latter politely accepted. But the doctor played very carelessly, it must be confessed, and quite indifferently as to whether he should win or lose, and generally losing, to the colonel's great delight, as the doctor furtively observed the young man in whose future he was beginning to take so deep an interest.

So the quiet days went by.

The first event that disturbed the peace at The

Notches was a letter from Murdok Horah, in reply to the one that announced the death of his mother. The colonel's letter had really found him in Paris. The pleasures of the gay French capital had more attractions for him than the antiquities of Egypt, so he had renounced the expedition, and allowed his friend to set out out alone for Cairo, while he, himself, glad no doubt to be relieved of that friend's observation, remained behind, and, it is to be feared, gave himself up, with free license, to the wildest dissipations of the city. This, at least, was the inference deduced by Col. Pryor from all he had known of Murdok Horah, and all he could make of his letter.

That letter was little less than insulting to his correspondent. He began by expressing surprise and sorrow at the announcement of his mother's sudden and unexpected death, but in such a formal manner as to betray a lack of sincerity. He declared that he had no doubt that she had been moped and worried to death by the knaves and fools around her, who were always coddling her, and persuading her that she was ill. He said that he was shocked to think—as he must think for all Col. Pryor had written to the contrary—that Zenobia was left alone at the Hall, or worse than alone, "with that dead beat, Gilbert Godfrey, for a constant companion!" He expressed his desire, quite in the tone of command, that if this should be so, the interloper should immediately be sent about his business, as he had sponged upon the family long enough! And, further, that his own old nurse, Celia, should be called from her cabin in the poultry yard and established in the Hall as housekeeper and protector of Miss de Leon until his arrival.

"And let that pampered, conceited nigger, Servia, be sent out to take Celia's place among the henhouses. A great, strong, impudent creature like Servia should be working out in the fields," he added.

He concluded by saying, in a covert, threatening manner, that within a few days he should follow his letter, and see for himself how his instructions had been followed. He should make but a short stay; only long enough to settle up his estate, after which he should return to Paris, taking Zenobia de Leon with him, for, of course, he asserted, since the death of his mother, he was the girl's legal guardian, and he should not fail to claim, and, if necessary, enforce his rights. There was in the letter much more of the same sort of insolence, which need not be repeated here.

Col. Pryor had driven to Mistyrock that morning, and taken this letter from the post office himself, and read it as he drove home in his buggy.

"The man must be mad!" he said to himself. "Did anyone ever hear of such arrogance and presumption? Because I served my dearest friend, his mother, does he therefore imagine I am the paid agent of the estate? I cannot understand this fellow! His dense, stupid, obstinate pride, egotism and selfishness, pass my comprehension! The Horahs always were an evil race enough, the Lord knows; but they had some gentlemanly instincts, which seem to be totally lacking in this beast! How, oh, ye gods! came such a woman as Isabel Horah to bring forth such a brute as Murdok? But, never mind, my fine gentleman! We will bring you to your senses upon some points when you arrive, I think," said the colonel, grimly, as he put the insolent letter in his pocket, and resolved to say nothing about it to either of the girls, but to call a council of Gilbert Godfrey, Oliver and old Dr. Bland to discuss it in the evening.

So, when he got home, and was met with the usual anxious inquiry: "Any letters from the post office, uncle?" he only produced two for Jemima, from schoolmates, and suppressed the one from Murdok Horah.

That afternoon a blinding snowstorm came on, and,

the air turning bitterly cold, Col. Pryor ordered a fire to be kindled in the little room on the opposite side of the hall, saying that he should have some business to transact there in the course of the evening.

After tea was over, and when the family circle gathered closer around the broad fireplace of the big parlor, Oliver ventured to remark:

"I don't think Gilbert will be able to get over here to-night! The Zigzag Ravine Road must be impassable."

The words had scarcely left his lips, however, before there was a little bustle outside of stamping feet and opening doors, and Gilbert appeared, red-faced, vigorous, laughing and completely covered with snow, like the ideal ice king, or the children's Santa Claus.

"Why, Gilbert!" they each and all exclaimed, with amazement.

"Well, yes! I have had a time!" he exclaimed, as, with the help of Oliver and little Otto, he proceeded to divest himself of his frozen overcoat.

"And you are in such a state!" exclaimed Jemima.

"Why did you run the perilous risk, old man?" demanded Noll.

"Why did Leander swim the Hellespont?" inquired Gilbert in return, as he dropped his outer garment, which fell hard, with a rattle, to the floor, scattering frozen snow in all directions.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, colonel! I did not mean to be so rude," cried the young man, in confusion, as he stooped to try and repair damages.

"Nonsense! nonsense! There is no harm done. Clean ice and snow doesn't hurt bare boards! That's the good of having no troublesome carpets! Otto, pick up Mr. Godfrey's coat, and hang it on the rack. And then get a broom and sweep up the snow!"

"A dustpan and a bucket, also, Otto!" added Jemima.

"Come to the fire, Gilbert. Jim, you go and order a hot whisky punch for him, or he may get his death!"

"I have kept a hot cup of chocolate for him in case he should come, as I thought he would. And I think it will be better for him," said Miss Jemima.

"Oh, I beg both your pardons, my dear! I forgot you were teetotalers!" said the jolly colonel, laughing, as his niece left the room on her errand.

"You must not think that I am not glad to see you, old fellow, because I asked you how you came to run the risk! It was an awful risk, you know!" said Noll, apologetically.

"I know it now so well, my boy, that I shall not try it again to-night, but shall ask your father to give me shelter till the storm is over and the roads passable," replied Godfrey, as he sat down and stretched his hands over the fire.

"How jolly that will be! Now, with your company, we shall be able to defy bad weather and bad spirits as well," chuckled Noll.

Jemima reëntered, followed by Druse with a waiter, on which was placed a large pot of chocolate, a deep dish of doughnuts, and piles of cups and saucers and plates for the whole company.

Jemima arranged these edibles on the table.

Godfrey, who had not broken his fast since dinner, and whose sharp ride had given him a good appetite, made a very satisfactory repast, in which his friends joined but slightly. When it was over, Col. Pryor, who was longing to get the subject of that hateful letter off his mind, cleared his throat, and with some hesitation, for he disliked to make mysteries, said:

"My dears, I told you that I should have some business to transact this evening, and I shall really need the assistance of these young men for an hour or so. Can you lend them to me, and amuse yourselves alone for that length of time?"

"Well, I should hope so!" exclaimed Jemima. Then, turning to the parties in question, she said:

"Gilbert! Oliver! throw yourselves instantly at the feet of the king, my uncle, and tell him you are his obedient servants to command!"

Apparently the young men understood the order only metaphorically, for they were content to stand up and to express the pleasure they should feel in being of any service to the colonel. And they followed him to the cozy room in which the fire burned brightly.

They sat down at the little round table before the hearth.

"Now, boys," said the colonel, gravely, "I have a letter here from young Murdok Horah, which I cannot permit my dear girls to be troubled with, nor can I keep the matter to myself. Therefore, I must read it to you."

"Fire away, young marse!" cried Noll, encouragingly.

"First I must entreat you to control yourselves, and make no comment until I shall have concluded the reading."

"We will mind what you say, sir," replied Godfrey.

"Of course we will. But I say, young marse, what a frightful preface! What can be coming?" inquired Noll.

"You shall hear," replied the colonel, gravely. And he drew the letter from his pocket, opened it, and began its perusal.

It was well that he obtained that promise of self-control from the young men, for as the reading proceeded their warm blood boiled with indignation at the insolence of the writer.

When the perusal was finished and the letter replaced in the colonel's pocket, he lay back in his chair and looked at his companions.

Oliver, with flushed face and flashing eyes, fiercely demanded:

"Father, has that foul fiend any rights of guardianship over Zenobia? If he has, I would kill him with my own hands before I could see her fall into the power of that devil!"

"Hush! for God's sake, Noll, my boy! Your words are very wicked! And wholly unworthy of you! Pray the Lord to pardon you, my son!" said the good colonel, deeply shocked.

"Has he any legal rights of guardianship over her?" demanded Oliver, now in the sharpest anguish of anxiety.

"Of course not. How could he have? He is not her brother. He is not any relation to her. His words are nothing but impudent boasting. Zenobia is in no danger from him except, probably, of some annoyance."

"And I swear before Heaven he shall not annoy her!" hotly exclaimed Oliver.

"Possess your soul in peace, my boy," said the colonel.

"It seems to me," remarked Gilbert Godfrey, with an amused smile, "that I have the honor of being the best-abused individual of the party. I am, so to speak, kicked out of Horah Hall! At least, I am villified and discharged."

"And you should be glad, my dear boy," heartily exclaimed the colonel, clapping him on the back. "I know you only stayed at the horrible old pile to oblige me. And I only asked you to do it from an absurd sense of duty to the interests of my dear friend's good-for-nothing son. But now neither you nor I can feel under any obligations to trouble ourselves about his interests; and so, my boy, you need never go back to Horah Hall, but just stay on here, to cheer us with your company until you find something more worthy of you to do, and as long afterwards as you please," he concluded, taking the hand of Godfrey and giving it an affectionate squeeze.

"And now let us return to the girls."

Godfrey pressed that kind hand to his heart in speechless gratitude.

CHAPTER III.

STORMBOUND.

Dread winter spreads his latest glooms,
And reigns tremendous o'er the conquered year!
How dead the vegetable kingdom lies!
How dumb the tuneful! Horror wide extends
Her desolate domain! And naught around
Strikes the sad eye but deserts lost in snow!
And heavy loaded hills, and solid floods
That stretch athwart the solitary vast
Their icy horror!—THOMSON'S SEASONS.

The hurricane snowstorm raged furiously all night, the wind blowing a gale, the snow driven in clouds before it. The next morning the frenzy of the battling elements was, if possible, redoubled.

The doors and windows of The Notches mansion were blocked by heavy drifts of snow, and had to be forced open with the greatest difficulty.

When at length the inmates could look out, the wind was still raging and roaring, and the snow whirling and driving at such a frantic rate, and piled up in such high drifts, that nothing could be seen in the white chaos but the weathercock sticking out through the drift that buried the barn!

"It is glorious!" exclaimed Zenobia, enthusiastically.

"No one will be able to leave or enter the house for days!" remarked Jemima.

They were standing before the front windows of the long parlor, looking out on the white phenomenon. But Jemima was mistaken.

Tim, at the head of the strongest field hands, was already engaged in digging a path through the white mounds between the outer gates of the lawn to the front door of the house.

"Well, we'll help them, boys," said the colonel, jollily, to his son and guest.

And the three men hurriedly put on their overcoats and rubber boots, and went out to begin their work from the house door, so as to meet the men who were slowly working their way from the other end. But their difficulty was great, and their progress slow; for the wind and snow worked against them. However, the three white men labored quite as hard as the negroes until the breakfast bell rang, when they threw down their shovels and came into the house.

Fortunately there was a covered way between the rear of the house and the building at the back of the yard which contained the kitchen and laundry on the ground floor, and the house servants' bedrooms on the upper one, so the communication was not cut off by the storm between the family and the culinary department. And Druse, either in honor of the storm or of the guests, or both, certainly distinguished herself that morning by placing before her master and his friends one of the very best breakfasts she had ever cooked.

It was a merry party—really made merry by the exhilarating snowstorm—that sat down to the table. Jemima was especially happy in the confidence of having her lover's company at the house for an indefinite time, for, of course, she knew that for many days to come there could be no possibility of reaching Horah Hall through the deep and dangerous snowdrifts that must have rendered the Zigzag Ravine impassable for travelers.

Godfrey, too, might have been happy but for the dark and doubtful outlook of his future, of which Jemima as yet knew nothing, suspected nothing. It was very kind

in Col. Pryor to bid him welcome for any time—yes, for all time to The Notches! and to beg him to consider that house his home as long as he should please to give him and his family the happiness of his company—very kind! But Gilbert Godfrey was not the one who could bear to accept such an invitation or such an obligation from his best friend or from the noblest man. He must go forth and earn his living, and pay his family's debts! —as teacher, clerk or agent; even as a farm laborer on his own paternal acres, if no more congenial occupation should offer! And this meant leaving Jemima.

"It might be for years, or it might be forever!"

Certainly forever, if nothing better than manual labor was to be his fate. For, much as he himself honored labor, willing as he knew Jemima was to share his hard life, liberally as broad-minded Nat Pryor looked upon their prospective union, Maj. Abbace, an arrogant army officer, a military martinet, would be much more likely to meet his proposal for Jemima's hand with a bullet than a blessing. No, his hope of ever marrying Jemima hung upon his professional success. He must take his degree and get a practice, perhaps distinguish himself as a physician.

Distinguish himself? What? When the medical, as well as every other learned profession was so crowded! It is all very well to say to the young professional aspirant, "There is plenty of room higher up!"

Yes! but when every rung of the ladder is so densely crowded, not only by the honest and capable, but by the unworthy and incompetent, and when it seems as if the only way to climb is to knock down, trip up and trample over, not only every competitor, but every principle of truth, justice, honesty and humanity.

Gilbert Godfrey was little over thirty years of age, yet he had seen enough of the world to learn what mockery to a true man is that phrase "Plenty of room

higher up." Godfrey was capable of great self-denial, industry and perseverance, even to the extremity of enduring hunger, cold and long vigils in his pursuit of a worthy ambition, but he was not prepared to sacrifice principle. If he could not honestly and honorably succeed in his profession, then he was man enough to honestly and honorably fail. Many succeeded, he knew; but, alas! many more failed.

In the meantime, his own great difficulties disheartened him.

Godfrey's face was the only grave one at the breakfast table that morning. And though he would sometimes smile at the merry sallies of Jemima, or of Oliver, yet his very smile was full of sadness. And all this time he had no more idea of the kind thoughts that were gradually forming themselves into plans for his welfare in the mind of the benevolent Dr. Bland, than we have of the "silver lining" of that dark cloud whose aspect is so often threatening us.

The furious snowstorm raged for twenty-four hours, and subsided at about the same time of the afternoon at which it had arisen on the previous day.

Meantime, paths had been opened between the house and all the outlying farm buildings. But the roads were so blocked with snow and ice that no one could venture from the plantation, and no one could come from the outside world.

The next day the wind changed to the south, and a mighty thaw set in that formed a much worse impediment to travel than anything that had gone before it. On the fourth day, however, the wind shifted to the northwest and the weather turned bitterly cold; the mercury fell to zero, and the earth froze "as hard as a rock," according to Tim's report. But the roads were then passable.

The very first visitor who put in an appearance at The Notches was Dr. Bland, who arrived late in the

afternoon of the fifth day, half frozen and also half dead with fatigue from a round of professional calls in the neighborhood.

Col. Pryor hurried out to the hall door to welcome him.

"Never knew such severe weather in all my long life! Never had so many cases of pneumonia, pleurisy and rheumatism in all my medical experience!" exclaimed the doctor, naturally beginning to "talk shop."

"Yes, and you are trying to add one more item in your own person to the list," replied the colonel, as he heartily shook the doctor by the hand.

"In the line of duty, sir. In the line of duty," responded Dr. Bland.

"Now, let your man take his horse and gig to the stable and put them up, and then take himself round to the kitchen fire. You will neither of you think of taking the road again to-night," said the colonel.

"My dear sir, I thank you; but I have not slept out of my own bed for thirty years," said the doctor, with a laugh.

"Nor has there been such a week of storm in all that time," retorted the colonel. "And I shall not permit you to leave this house to-night, if I have to keep you prisoner by sheer force and violence. What do you say, young folks?" he inquired, as he hurried his guest into the warm parlor, where a fine, open, wood fire was burning, and the table set for supper.

The young people, who had been sitting about the room engaged in various occupations, instantly started to their feet, and hurried forward with gushing welcomes, for they all loved the doctor.

The two young men took off his overcoat, and took his hat and gloves and carried them away, while the girls between them wheeled the large easy-chair to the front of the fire, shook up its cushion, and made him sit down in it.

"You will stay with us to-night, will you not, dear doctor?" pleaded Jemima.

"Do, dear Dr. Bland, just this once," chimed in Zenobia.

"Little ones, I am not obdurate; I cannot resist you. I'll stay," said the doctor, patting both their heads. And turning to his host, he added, "Thank you, colonel! I will be a submissive prisoner."

Jemima ran out the whole length of the covered way to the kitchen, and startled the cook by exclaiming:

"Druse, I want you to add some sort of hot, juicy, peppery dish to the supper. Here's Dr. Bland come in cold as ice and tired to death. And you must see that Otto makes a good, rousing fire in the best spare bedroom, for the doctor is going to stay all night."

"Oh, yes, I know," cried the woman, "W'ich I do 'spect at eberyone w'at comes ter dis yere house now'll be sure ter stay inter it till de weader b'eaks. Yes, we den hab a house full!"

"And now fill a pitcher with that boiling cocoa, and I will take it to the doctor, to warm him while we are waiting for supper," said Jemima.

The cook obeyed in silence.

"And now have something hot ready for his man when he comes in from the stable, and fix a shakedown for him in some comfortable place, for he must stay all night, too," added the girl, as she shifted the hot pitcher from one hand to the other.

"Oh, ob course! Anybody else, Miss Jemima? W'en's de ole marse gwine ter hang out his sign as dis is P'yor's hotel, fer de 'commodation ob man an' beas'?"

"Hold your tongue, Druse! If I did not know you were joking, I should feel ashamed of you!" exclaimed Jemima, as she turned and hurried back to the parlor, to comfort the chilled guest with the hot, aromatic draught that truly "cheers, but not inebriates."

Supper was soon afterward served and heartily consumed.

But during the meal, and after it was over and the table cleared, and the party of friends assembled around the fire, Dr. Bland could not fail to observe the grave and careworn aspect of his young favorite, Gilbert Godfrey, who could not be roused to cheerfulness even by the presence and the bright sallies of his young companions.

"And no wonder, poor lad!" said the doctor to himself. "Not the least wonder when one thinks of the hopeless prospect before him."

And Dr. Bland suddenly resolved to bring matters to an issue by inviting the young man to visit him at his house, where they might converse confidentially without fear of interruption.

"Mr. Godfrey," he began.

Gilbert looked up with respectful attention.

"I wish you would find time to come and see me at my home some day. I will not be so unreasonable as to ask you to sacrifice one of your pleasant evenings here. When I start out early, I usually get through my rounds at about three o'clock in the afternoon, and if your duties at Horah Hall do not engage you at that time, I should be glad to see you and have a talk with you."

"I think, Dr. Bland, I can come at any hour you please. My time is, unfortunately for me, very much at my disposal. My duties at Horah Hall are over," said the young man.

"Well, I am heartily glad to hear it!" exclaimed the doctor. "Your position there was quite unworthy of you."

"But do you really think, sir, that any position in which he can be honestly useful quite unworthy any man?" deferentially inquired Godfrey.

"Yes," emphatically replied the old physician; "when

there is another, a higher, more honorable position in which he can be much more useful waiting for him."

"I fear I do not understand you, Dr. Bland," said Godfrey.

"Then, my dear young friend, as your time is at your own disposal, I will ask you to ride with me to-morrow morning on my professional rounds, and then I can explain all that seems mysterious in my present speech. I can leave my man here, and on my way home I can drop you here and pick him up. After that your friends may be resigned to spare you to me for a prolonged visit, though I see signs of dissent in their faces even now," concluded the doctor, glancing around the circle.

"Godfrey must please himself," said the colonel, with jealous hospitality, if such a phrase be allowable. "This is his home, and we are his family, but it is not his jail, nor are we his jailers."

"I thank you very much, from the depths of my heart," said Godfrey, but he could not commit himself further at that time.

Jemima had been listening to the conversation in silence and dismay. To her apprehension, Godfrey's leaving Horah Hall meant his leaving the neighborhood for parts unknown and time indefinite. Now, in the pause of the conversation, her trouble found expression in the exclamation:

"You never told me that you had left Horah Hall forever. I thought you were only weather-bound here."

"I am weather-bound, or, rather, have been. As for the rest, I had not the courage to speak of my impending departure until it should be absolutely necessary to do so. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,' you know," replied Godfrey, as he rose from his seat beside the doctor and went across the room to Jemima.

"Come, doctor," exclaimed the colonel, starting gayly to his feet, "I had the good fortune to beat you the

night before the storm, and now you may have your revenge, if you please."

"And if I can," demurred the old physician, with a grimace.

Col. Pryor went out and brought the cards and placed a little round table between himself and his guest, and they sat down to the game.

Godfrey and Jemima played checkers, and Oliver and Zenobia dominoes.

But it must be confessed that these *tête-à-tête* games were only excuses for a vast deal of low-toned talk between the two pairs of lovers.

So passed the evening.

CHAPTER IV.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

The grand old man, in pure benevolence,
Would know what course his future steps might take.
—BERANGER.

The next morning was cold, clear and bright.

Immediately after an early and substantial breakfast, enlivened by happy faces and cheerful conversation, David, the doctor's man, brought his master's horse and gig around to the front door, to take him on his professional rounds.

Dr. Bland and Gilbert Godfrey came down the front steps well wrapped up—quite an arctic outfit, indeed—for their freezing expedition.

"This young gentleman is going to be kind enough to drive me, David, and you may remain here until our return in the afternoon," said the doctor, as he and his companion reached the side of the gig.

"All right, Marse Doctor," said the man, who stood

clapping his thick-gloved hands and stamping his heavy-booted feet to keep them warm. "All right, ef yer say so, w'ich I hopes as de youn' ge'man 'ont spill ye ober the Belz'bub Bluff, nor likewise opset yer inter de Zigzags!"

"No danger, my good fellow! Come, Godfrey, my young friend, jump in," laughed the doctor.

"An' now le'me ax yer, old marse, 'long as yer gwine ter stay all de whole day on dem roun's ob yer's, woane yer le'me go home an' pacify de ole 'oman? Yer see, I knows Dinah hab heaved herse'f inter a state ob mind 'bout me not 'riving home las' night," pleaded the old negro.

"Ah, no doubt of it! I can fancy the 'state of mind.' You are quite right, David. Perhaps the colonel will lend you a horse, and let you do his errands in the town this morning and bring back his mail. And that will save Tim the jaunt. But be sure to get back here in time to drive me home," said the doctor, as he climbed into his seat and drew the rug over his knees.

"Now, Marse Doctor, who's yer 'monishing? Aine I allers in good time?" demanded David, with an injured air.

"That you are, old man," emphatically responded his master. "And I beg your pardon," he added, laughing. "Now, then, Godfrey!"

The young man started the horse and they drove off.

"We must drive slowly and carefully here," said the doctor, as they turned out of the farm gate into the rough country road. "And as we go along, my young friend, I wish to have a little talk with you."

"Yes, sir; I am at your service," said the young man, politely.

"You tell me that you have finally left your post at Horah Hall?"

Godfrey bowed.

"Will you tell me, as a friend who has a very sincere

interest in you, what your plans for the future are?" inquired the old physician, with a gentle deference in his manner that precluded the suspicion of patronage or condescension on his part.

Even Godfrey's sensitive pride could not be touched by it.

"Sir, you are very good; but I have not as yet formed any plans, unless to take up the very first honest work that comes to hand," he replied.

"Good! Then I have work—suitable work, let me add—to show you," pursued the doctor, in a tone and with a smile that showed the genuine satisfaction he took in his part.

"Sir, you are more than kind," said Godfrey, looking up in surprise and inquiry.

"Not at all. I am seeking my own interest as well as yours, my dear fellow. You are just the man I want, and I only hope that I may be the man you can tolerate."

"Oh, Dr. Bland!"

"Let me explain," continued the doctor. "I have heard that you have had a three years' course at the medical department of the University of Virginia. Is that so?"

"Within a few days of three years, sir."

"My old *alma mater*," murmured the doctor, in a meditative tone. I am an *alumnus* of the class of '28, the first that graduated after the medical department was opened. And so you had three years in that school! And, no doubt, you made good use of your time. Why, then, my dear young friend, if you will permit me to inquire, did you not take your degree?" questioned the old doctor, in a hesitating and deprecating manner, for, while he wished to be beneficial, he shrank from seeming officious.

"I was called home, sir, by family troubles. And I

never had it in my power to go back," replied the young man, in a subdued tone.

Dr. Bland's kind, blue eyes were fixed upon him in such respectful sympathy that Godfrey, after a short pause, said:

"I ought to explain to you, sir, that our old homestead, which has been in our family for more than two hundred years, was so heavily mortgaged that my brother and myself resolved to forego all ambitious dreams of a professional life, and go hard to work, not only to pay interest on the mortgages, but also to gradually liquidate the debt. Thank Heaven! that is nearly accomplished now."

"Then, my dear Godfrey, listen to my proposal. I want an assistant in my practice; and I want you to come into my office in that capacity. Come as soon as you please. Come at once, if you will. Fix your own remuneration. We shall not disagree on that subject. Next year you can go up to Charlottesville and take your degree. Then return to my office as my partner and prospective successor."

Godfrey was looking down, and as he did not reply, the doctor continued:

"Of course, if you please, you will live in my house, for the convenience of both of us. It is roomy and quiet, as there is no one but myself and the two old negro servants. To be sure, they are master and mistress of the establishment, as may be readily supposed. And they are rather despotic. But you won't mind that, I hope. I do not."

Then, as Godfrey still kept silent, the doctor suddenly demanded:

"Well, my young friend, what do you say to my proposal? Or is there anything else that I can advance to tempt you to its acceptance? Speak!"

"What can I say!" exclaimed Godfrey, with a sudden burst of emotion which had half choked him. "Oh, oh,

how can I express my gratitude in words? I pray God I may sometime be able to prove it in deeds! Your generosity to me—to one who has no claim on you—it—overwhelms me!"

"Oh, now! Come, come, my dear fellow! You are young and enthusiastic! You overestimate things. Why, the obligation will be quite mutual between us. If it were not to be so, I should not dare to affront your independence by proposing such an arrangement. Besides, God bless my soul! it is not a fortune that I am offering you, nor even a possible road to fortune. Ah, no! But it is a field of work in which you will be able to make your living, serve your neighbors and worship your God! And that ought to be enough to satisfy a Christian philosopher. I think so, at least, judging from my own experience. I have had a happy life as a country practitioner, though a laborious one."

"Oh, sir, the prospect you offer me opens a vista of paradise!" exclaimed Godfrey, with emotion, for he saw, as in a vision, Jemima at the end of the vista.

"Here we are at the Hill farm. The old gentleman is laid up with inflammatory rheumatism. Now, if you like to come in with me and get warm, why, do so," said Dr. Bland, not unwilling to have Godfrey's embarrassing thanks cut short.

"Oh, no, if you please, I will sit here," replied the young man.

Dr. Bland left the gig and went in alone. This was the first professional call that day, but after that the doctor made about ten others before he turned homeward.

The sun was setting as they neared The Notches.

"Well, my dear friend, when will you join me?" inquired the doctor, as they came in sight of the old gray-stoned house.

"Just as soon as I may, sir," promptly replied Godfrey.

"That will be as soon as you please. The sooner the better," declared the doctor.

"This is Saturday. Shall we say Monday?" suggested Godfrey.

"Monday it is," exclaimed the doctor.

"Here we are," said Godfrey, as they drew up before the door.

Little Otto must have been on the lookout from some sheltered spot in the house, for scarcely had the gig come to a stand, when the front door was pulled open by the boy, who came dancing out to take the horse's head, and crying:

"Miss Jimmy hab anuzzer dinner cooked fo' yo' two gempulmun."—Otto, under the tuition of Jemima, was trying to improve his language, and gempulmun was one of the results.

The doctor felt in his pockets and gave Otto a dime.

"A bad habit," he observed to Godfrey, aside, "but you are bound to find me out, and discover that I am full of bad habits."

They got out and went into the house, while Otto jumped into the gig, as proud as a popinjay, and took the reins, thinking that he was driving the horse to the stable, when, in very truth, the animal was going there as fast as he could of his own sweet will.

The two men hurried into the parlor, where they found the whole family party waiting to welcome them, a splendid fire burning in the broad chimney, and the table set, not for a "nuzzer dinner," as Otto reported, but for "high tea"—that is, tea with hot meats. They were immediately made very comfortable, and the evening meal was served.

But both the doctor and Godfrey noticed that a cloud hung over the spirits of the whole family. They were not the merry circle of the preceding evening.

When tea was over the trouble came out.

"We have had some news," said the colonel, with a

curiously grim smile. "Dave brought letters from the post office announcing the arrival of Murdok Horah in New York, and informing us that we may expect him here on Monday, or Tuesday at the furthest."

"That is an evil hearing for the negroes at the Hall," remarked Godfrey.

"Yes," assented the doctor, "for a more ill-conditioned cub than this young Horah does not live. He seems to me, from all I have seen of him, to be the very worst of a very evil race. I do really believe him to be insane!"

"And irresponsible, doctor?" queried the colonel.

"I cannot venture to give an opinion on that head," cautiously replied the old physician.

"He is sure to give trouble," remarked Oliver.

Zenobia's face flushed and paled. Even Jemima looked disturbed.

"I would have willingly kept the fellow's approach from the knowledge of these girls, who have a morbid, unreasoning, almost superstitious dread of the beast; but, you see, with my letter came one for Zenobia, in which he informs our young lady that he means to claim her as his ward, and take her back to Paris with him," explained the colonel.

"I'll pitch him headlong down Beelzebub's Bluff, to dash his brains out at the bottom of the Zigzags before he shall trouble her!" muttered Oliver, in an inaudible voice under his grinding teeth.

"Of course he cannot take her away against her will? He has no authority over her?" said the doctor, inquisitively.

"Of course he cannot. He has no more power over her than he has over Jemima. So I tell these young women. But they believe in a devil, and believe he is Murdok Horah. But, come; let us dismiss the subject and get to our games. Come, doctor, let us fight our battles over again.

The doctor and the colonel sat down to "old sledge," Godfrey and Jemima to checkers, and Oliver and Zenobia to dominoes.

Godfrey had drawn a little stand to a distant corner of the room, for he wished to tell Jemima of the good fortune that opened a prospect which would justify him in speaking plainly to her of his love, which had as yet only been expressed in the glance of his eye and the tone of his voice. When they had sat down to their game they drew for the first move, and Godfrey won it.

"It is yours," said Jemima.

"Yes, it is my move, at last! At last!" he breathed, with a deep inspiration, but he did not touch a piece.

"Well, why do you not begin?" she inquired, looking at him in surprise and wondering what was the matter.

His eyes met hers in a solemn gaze, as he answered:

> "'He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his desserts are small,
> Who does not put it to the touch,
> And win or lose it all!'"

"Well, if I were you I would just run the risk and get it over," she said, thinking, or seeming to think, only of checkers.

"I will," he replied, bending over and taking both her hands in his own. Then he whispered in a trembling voice, "Jemima, I love you!" And there he stopped, gazing into her eyes as if his salvation hung upon her answer.

"I know you do, Godfrey," she murmured, simply dropping her eyes.

"And—you are—not displeased—with me—for—telling you so?"

"You know that I am not."

"And—you care—for me—a little?"

"You should know that I care for you more than a little, Godfrey," she replied in a very low tone, as she

raised her eyes to his for an instant in a quick and quickly lowered glance.

"Oh, my dearest, you have made me so happy! My beloved. I have loved you from the first hour I met you, years ago! Even then I felt:

> "'As if my soul that moment caught
> A blessing it through life had sought.'

"But not until to-day, my dearest, have I found the right to speak of it to you. To-day, through the kindness of Dr. Bland, a career is opened for me. I wish to tell you all about it before telling anyone else. It is your right to hear it first. Shall I tell you?"

"Yes, yes! I am anxious to know," she answered, with eager sympathy.

Then he told her all that had passed between the old doctor and himself.

At the end of the narrative Jemima took his hand and pressed it with mute but heartfelt congratulation.

"But, you see, my best beloved, that it is only a very humble position, in a worldly point of view, that I can offer the daughter of Maj. Abbace—that of the wife of a poor, hard-working country physician," he said, in a deprecating tone.

"My own Godfrey!" she answered, gravely and tenderly, "our position may be poor, but it will be honorable, even from a worldly piont of view. But if you had become a farm laborer, as you talked of being, that circumstance would have made no difference in you, and, therefore, would have made none in me."

"What, Jemima!" he exclaimed, "do you mean that you would still have given yourself to me if—if——" He could not go on; he could only hold her hands and gaze into her eyes.

"Indeed, I would," she brightly answered, "for you would have still been yourself. The same, dear God-

frey! my own, dear Godfrey, with the same noble heart and cultured mind and refined spirit, whether in a laborer's hut or the office of the physician," she answered, gravely and sweetly, pressing the shaking hands that held hers.

"Oh, my God! my God!" he breathed, with heaving breast, "how have I deserved this joy? What right have I to this pure, unselfish, heavenly love?"

"The right divine," she murmured. "The right divine—more than that of kings. The right conferred by the God of Love, who breathed into my soul this love for you which makes me yours forever."

"Say, is that game over? Who has won?" inquired the cheery voice of Nat Pryor, as he trotted toward them.

The happy lovers were startled, but Godfrey soon recovered himself and answered with a strangely triumphant air:

"I have won, sir!"

"Oh, indeed, uncle, dear, I myself have won," exclaimed Jemima, smiling radiantly.

"Ah, a drawn game," surmised the jolly colonel.

"A very closely drawn game!" declared Godfrey.

"Ah, well, my dears, I would not have interrupted you, but you seemed to have finished your game, and to be just about to begin a new one, and I wanted Jim to go and order a pot of chocolate and some other refreshments—all hot, if you please, my dear, for the good doctor before he goes out in the cold to-night," said the colonel.

"That I will, and with the greatest pleasure!" exclaimed Jemima, starting up and running out of the room.

Half an hour later the hot supper was served. And at ten o'clock the old doctor, in his arctic outfit, bade the family good-night.

CHAPTER V.

PANIC AMONG THE DARKIES.

A sudden terror seized that wretched crowd!
Some tore their hair, while other shrieked aloud.
—ANON.

The next day was the Sabbath. Immediately after breakfast the girls went upstairs to dress for church. Oliver went out to the stable to have the closed carriage and two saddle horses got ready to convey the family to Mistyrock.

Then Godfrey, seeing his opportunity, went up to Col. Pryor and asked:

"Can you afford me a few moments' conversation, sir?"

"Certainly, my dear boy. Come this way," cordially assented the colonel. And he led his young friend into the little parlor in which he was of late accustomed to transact his business.

"Now, then, Godfrey, take a seat and fire away," he exclaimed, pleasantly, dropping into one armchair and pushing another toward his guest.

Gilbert sat down and told the colonel his story of Dr. Bland's proposition to take him as assistant into his office, with the prospect of future partnership between them. He concluded by saying:

"I am to enter upon my duties to-morrow."

"My dear fellow, I congratulate you with all my heart and soul. I thank God for your good fortune!" cordially exclaimed the large-hearted colonel, jumping up, seizing both of the young man's hands and shaking them vigorously.

"Thank you, sir. Thank you for your kind sympathy. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Bland for his generous offer and his kind consideration of me; am I not, sir?" said Godfrey, with emotion.

"Indeed you are, my dear fellow. More than you are aware of, perhaps! For, let me tell you, Godfrey, my boy, you might have graduated at Leipsic, Vienna or Paris, to say nothing of our own medical colleges. You might have taken the highest honors in all, and yet fail to get a practice even in a country neighborhood, unless some old-established physician introduced you. Yes, you are very greatly indebted to Dr. Bland."

"How shall I ever repay him!" exclaimed Godfrey, with emotion.

"Oh, no doubt you will repay him tenfold, my dear boy. He is growing old, and he never was strong. His practice here is dear to his heart. He would still look after it, at any cost to his own health or life. But if he can have an assistant whom he can train into his methods, and trust freely, and like personally—as he will you—he will continue to practice in this neighborhood as long as he lives; and when he dies he will leave you a practice to defy competition from any possible newcomer. Godfrey, if you were my son, I could not wish you better fortune than to enter the office of Dr. Bland as his present assistant and prospective partner, and final successor. He is a sincere Christian as well as a learned physician. In both characters, spiritually and materially, his association will be of great and lasting benefit to you. At least such is my opinion. And again I thank God for the good He is bringing to you through His faithful servant," declared the colonel.

"And once more I thank you, sir, for your hearty sympathy," responded Godfrey.

Then there was a short silence, which was first broken by Godfrey, who began, with some hestitation and embarrassment, to say:

"But there is another subject, very near my heart, on which I wish to speak to you, sir—on which, indeed, it is my bounden duty to speak to you—yet which I should never have had the courage to mention but for

the kindness of Dr. Bland, who has opened for me some good prospect for the future."

And here Godfrey paused again in some confusion.

"Come, come, my boy! Load up again and blaze away! What is it now!" cordially demanded the colonel.

"Your lovely niece, sir," Godfrey began, and stopped.

"Well! Well! Speak up, my boy! Don't be backward. Not with me. Lord bless you, lad, I have been there myself!" chuckled the colonel, jollily, rubbing his hands.

Then Godfrey told the story of his long love for Jemima, and his hope to make her his wife on the condition of his professional success, and the consent of her father and uncle.

"I doubt if Jemima made any such conditions herself," laughed the colonel. Then, growing suddenly grave, he continued: "So far as my own consent and approval go, you have both, with all my heart and soul. But I am not the highest authority. There is her father, Maj. Abbace. You will have to write to him. But as you are a total stranger to him, I will give you a letter to inclose in yours as an introduction, and you need not doubt, my dear boy, that I shall speak of you as you deserve," warmly declared the colonel.

"Oh, no! Not as I deserve! That might be fatal to my hopes! But as you esteem me, colonel!" said Godfrey, smiling for the first time during the interview.

"All right. As I think you deserve, then," assented Nat Pryor.

"And I thank you, sir, more than I can express!" said Godfrey, with emotion.

"There, there! that will do. Here are the girls," exclaimed Nat Pryor, as light steps were heard tripping down the uncarpeted stairs.

The whole party started for church. Col. Pryor and the girls rode in the carriage, with Tim on the box and little Otto beside him. Godfrey and Oliver rode on the

saddled horses. Behind them came the big ox cart, drawn by a pair of stout bullocks, and crowded with such of the plantation negroes as preferred the Episcopal Church to the "Methody Meetin'" favored by the majority of their class.

So the procession set out for the village. They went a long way to a prolonged service, and after it was over they came the same long way back to a late dinner. They spent the evening in a parlor concert of sacred music, and retired early.

The next morning Godfrey borrowed a carriage from Col. Pryor, and drove over to Horah Hall to announce the heir's speedy arrival, and to fetch away his own effects. He was met at the outer gate by the dogs, who ran around him, jumped upon him and welcomed him with the joyous barks of their species. He left the carriage at the gate in charge of Tim; and, attended by the canine committee of reception, walked on toward the house.

How dreary, desolate and forbidding the old graystone pile looked! The front was all closed fast. Not a human being was to be seen about the house or grounds. Nor, indeed, any other living creature except himself and the dogs.

He went up the steps to the door and knocked loudly on the great, old, iron lion's head that ornamented the panels. He waited, and, as no answer came, he knocked again. But without effect.

"Where are they all, Shep?" he inquired, addressing the large collie, who stood eager and expectant at his side.

The shepherd dog, as if he understood the question, and was equal to the occasion, answered with a quick, single bark, and turned and set off in a run round the house to the rear of the premises.

"Oh! They are all gathered in the back kitchen, are they? Thank you, Shep! You're a gentleman," laughed

Godfrey, as he came down the steps and followed the collie, followed in his turn by the other dogs. He found Shep yawning lustily at the door of the building. Before he quite reached it, the door was torn open by Cindy, whose voice rose in grumbling:

"W'at's de matter 'long ob yo', Shep, makin' me take my arms out'n de suds fo' nuffin'! Oh! Marse Gibbet! Dat yo', sah? I nebber seed yer firs'. I jis' t'ought how it wer' Shep's nonsens'. Please go roun' ter de front do', sah, an' I'll open it. Der aine nobody lef' ter stay in de hous' now sence yer be'n away—no, sah."

"Thank you, Cindy," said the young man, as soon as he could get a word in. "I would rather go in this way. I have not come to stay, but only to fetch away my effects, and deliver a message to you all." And so saying, he passed the woman and entered the warm kitchen.

"Now, Lord! Marse Gibbet! Yer's nebber gwine ter 'sert we po' darkies?" pleaded Cindy, in a pathetic voice.

"I am sent away, and must go because I have no alternative," said the young man.

"No al—w'at's—er—name? Now, yer kno' ef yer 'quired one dem as how Marse Co'nel Nat P'yor'd wance yer de money fer ter git it. W'ich yer needn' mind nudder, case we human creeturs is all brudders an' sisters, brack an' w'ite! An' arter all yer could pay him ag'in an' be unner no obl'gations ter nobody. Do that, Marse Gibbet. Tell Marse Co'nel! an' doane 'sert us fer nuffin'!" pleaded Cindy.

"I have no choice, Cindy. I have been dismissed by a letter from your master," Godfrey explained.

"Dis—— Whee-ee-ew! Whip your horses! W'at's he gwine do nex'!" exclaimed Cindy, in dismay.

"Now, I want you to call all the colored people together in this room where I may speak to them, for I

have a message to deliver which will be my last duty here."

Cindy, with a deep sigh of resignation to the inevitable, pulled down her rolled-up sleeves, took a large, plaid, woolen shawl, tied it over her head, and went out, saying:

"Dere's not a libbin' soul in de house 'cept 'tis yo' an' me, young marse, so I has ter go ter Celie's house and scare 'em up."

She hurried with her news to the cabin of the poultry woman, where she found old Si.

"Jump up, Uncle Si'as, an' run out ter de barn an' de stable, an' de fiel', an' eberyw'ere, an' scare up all de darkies, an' tell 'em ter come into my kitchen an' see youn' Marse Gibbet, w'ich is gwine 'way an' wan's ter talk ter yo' 'fo he goes!"

"Marse Gibbet gwine 'way!" exclaimed Si, in consternation; for, unreasonable as was the idea, he fancied that the ex-tutor held a sort of clerical prestige in the house, and could exercise some ameliorating influence over the unfeeling young despot who was to rule over the plantation. Si himself was, of course, beyond the power of the tyrant, having been freed by the will of his late mistress, but his sympathies were moved for his companions.

"Yes! It's truf I'm tellin' yer! Now, run an' scare up the darkies an' fetch dem 'long!"

Si put on his hat, and hurried out to spread the news and summon the negroes.

Celia and Cindy remained alone in the cabin.

"Does Mr. Godfrey speak of any letters coming lately from Mr. Horah!" inquired Celia.

"Now blame yo' imperence fer callin' de youn' marse Mr. Horah! Him's youn' marse ter us, he is! No matter w'at he is," said Cindy, who, though she was no admirer of Murdok Horah, yet took offense at what she considered the "airs of Celia."

The latter smiled "superior," but made no direct answer, only saying:

"You have not yet answered my question."

"W'ich w'en yer axes ob it wid p'oper 'spect fer yer pastors an' masters, 'cordin' ter de Scripters, I will," replied Cindy, with dignity.

"Then, Mrs. Cynthia Thompson, will you please to be so obliging as to inform me whether Mr. Godfrey, the agent for this estate, has received any letter lately from our young master?" inquired Celia, with an ironical sneer.

"Lor' forgib yer, Celia Boker, ef yer aine de mos' affectedest nigger I ebber seed inter all my boane days! Dere!" exclaimed Cindy.

"Has a letter come?" sharply demanded Celia.

"Come 'long ter de kitchen an' fine out!" retorted Cindy, marching out of the cabin.

A few minutes later the whole force of the plantation was assembled in the large kitchen of Horah Hall.

For better air in the crowded room, Godfrey seated himself on the top of the table, and from that point of vantage spoke to the negroes—giving them all the messages of their master, as he felt bound in duty toward his deceased friend to do. He charged the farm hands to have barns, stables, cattle pens, and, in short, every department of the plantation under their care, put in perfect order. He directed the house servants to have the dwelling cleaned, ventilated and warmed; and to see that the larder was well replenished to furnish a good meal at the shortest notice. He ended by informing them that their master was expected home soon and might arrive at any moment.

A dead silence followed. No one spoke or moved except Celia, who rose and left the kitchen, probably to set about some special preparations of her own.

Godfrey, having conscientiously discharged his duty,

called Brush to help him in packing up and removing his few effects to the carriage.

When this was done, Godfrey took leave of his colored friends, telling them that as he should remain in the neighborhood for some time, he would have frequent opportunities of seeing them.

After he had gone, the negroes, who had not separated to go about their various tasks, but who had, on the contrary, gathered more closely together within the kitchen walls, as if for mutual protection, looked into each other's faces in a panic of helpless despair.

Now, if it had been Col. Pryor and his son Oliver who had been traveling in foreign countries, and were expected home at The Notches, there would have been nothing but joyful excitement and anticipation among the negroes of that plantation, for they loved the master whose gentle and sympathetic rule over them was really patriarchal. But at Horah Hall it was different. The Horahs, from father to son, in every generation, had been cruel despots who, indeed, "feared not God, neither regarded man." And this last Murdok was the very worst of the line, in the memory of the oldest negro on the plantation. From his boyhood up he had tortured their children for his own amusement; he had maltreated and injured the elders—often very seriously—in one instance causing the loss of an eye, in another the loss of a life. Even his young foster sister had not been safe from his persecutions, nor his mother sacred from his insults. What had not these poor, helpless, ignorant creatures, now placed in his power, to expect from him?

Highly imaginative, prone to exaggerate either good or evil, their thoughts ran riot among the darkest horrors of slavery. The shame of the lash and the auction block; the anguish of separation of wives and husbands, parents and children; the awfulness of being sold to strangers and carried away to far-off, unknown parts;

all these horrors floated in visionary despair before their mind's eyes. They seemed stunned and speechless.

Si seized his banjo, struck a few chords, and then began to chant a weird, sorrowful, wild lament, enough, under the circumstances, to drive an excitable crowd crazy! The burden of his chant was an adjuration, in the name of the Highest, to fly for their lives, and all that was dearer than life! To fly from shame, torture, purgatory! To brave death in flight rather than stay here! Death would only carry them home to heaven, while life here would keep them in hell! It was minstrelsy run mad!

Its effect upon the people was electrical. There were howls, shouts and frenzy among the men; sobs, tears, hysterics among the women! The excitement increased; they became riotous, tumultuous, maddened! The scene was more violent than their sensational camp-meeting exaltations. When, at last, the crowd broke up, it was like the bursting of a bombshell; all shooting off to their various cabins with lightning speed to prepare for hasty flight! Flight in the dead winter; flight into a storm-wasted, open country.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE.

It was a small, old-fashioned room,
With light subdued, but not to gloom,
With paneled wainscot high;
Old pictures round in order set,
Carved, heavy tables, chairs, buffet,
Of dark mahogany.—SOUTHEY.

Gilbert Godfrey drove from Horah Hall to The Notches. As his carriage drew up before the front door he saw a light farm cart standing near, with old David, Dr. Bland's servant, on the driver's seat.

"'D'arternoon, young marse. I's jis' 'rove, an' in goo' time, too—hasn't I, sah? Ole Marse Doctor sont me ober yere ter fetch yo' chunks an' oder fings. He say how he'll call fer yo' hisself on his way home f'om his pashums," the negro explained.

"I am very much obliged to your good master, and to you also, David," replied the young man.

"Yes, sah," assented the servant, accepting the thanks. "An' now ef Mr. Timofy P'yor will be dat 'bligin' as fer ter he'p me ter tote down dat dere big chunk ob your'n, an' lif' it on ter de kyart, I'll be bery much beholdin' ter him, an' I'll start fer home."

Without waiting for the young gentleman to reply, Tim jumped off his seat and lent a willing hand to transfer the luggage from the carriage to the cart.

When this job was done and David was about to mount to his seat and drive away, Godfrey said: "I thank you both. But, David, had you not better throw a blanket over your horse's back and give him a rest, while you yourself go into the kitchen and get something warm before you take the road again on such a bitter cold night as this?"

"Jis' as yo' say, youn' marse! Jis' as yo' say, sah!

'Long as yo' 'dorses ob my takin' de liberty, I'll jis' saunterate roun' ter de kitchen, an' see ef Miss Druse hasn't got no chair in de chimly corner, an' somefin hot fo' ter comfit a pol' ole cullud ge'man's soul an' body dis same blusterous night," assented David, as he carefully covered his horse, and walked around to the rear of the house.

Meanwhile, Tim drove the carriage off to the stable, and Godfrey went up the steps and knocked at the front door.

Otto opened it, mutely grinning a glad welcome, and ushered him into the long parlor, where, as usual at that hour, the small family were assembled and where the table was set for supper.

In reply to their curious questions, Godfrey gave them an account of his visit to Horah Hall, and of the panic into which the negroes were thrown by the news of their master's expected return; at which the Pryors were not surprised. Oliver called to mind many instances of Murdok's cruelties, tyrannies and brutalities to the poor colored folks, which had come under his own immediate notice.

Col Pryor could have matched these tales with others in his own experience of the elder Horahs, but forbore, only remarking:

"I never knew a bad master that was not also as bad a son, brother, husband, father, neighbor and Christian! A bad master is always, according to my experience, equally as bad in every relation of life. Poor Isabel Horah would have found that out if her husband had lived a little longer. She was far on the way of finding it out in its greatest bitterness, through her only son, when her own death saved her. She was, indeed, saved from the evil to come. That almost consoles me for our personal loss of her. Yes, it is just such incarnate fiends as the Horahs, of Horah Hall, that bring all of us into disgrace among the just! And

will sometime bring down the vengeance of Heaven upon the guilty and guiltless alike!"

"But it is grievous that the good should suffer with the evil, Jemima objected.

"My dear, it is always so, and must always be so in this world. The tares must grow with the wheat until the harvest. Then the wheat must be even cut down with the tares. But finally the division is made. The wheat is gathered into the garner. The tares are cast into the fire! In this world the innocent must suffer with and for the guilty! Christ has nowhere promised us exemption from injustice, imposition or suffering in this brief and passing life. But He has promised life eternal to them who 'endure to the end.'"

A knock at the door now interrupted the good colonel's discourse, and soon, to Otto's opening, Dr. Bland entered.

All rose to welcome him, and he shook hands all round, before he said to Godfrey:

"Well, my young friend, are you ready? The gig is at the door."

"No, he is not ready! Neither are you!" heartily exclaimed Nat Pryor, while Godfrey and Oliver, with gentle violence, seized the doctor and took off his overcoat and carried it away, with his hat and gloves; and Jemima and Zenobia took each an arm, and made him sit down in the large, cushioned armchair in the chimney corner.

"Otto!" continued the colonel, "run away and tell your dad to put up the doctor's horse, and give him a first-rate rubbing down, and a good, warm mash, and take the rugs out of the gig and hang them before the kitchen fire to get the frost out of them. Quick! Vanish! Jim, my girl, you know your business better than I can teach you. Go do it."

He was promptly obeyed. The little negro went off as if shot from a gun. Jemima hastened away, smiling.

The colonel resumed his seat with the air of a despot who meant to have his will, and had it.

The doctor reclined in his comfortable cushioned chair, and folded his hands with the pretended resignation of a saint and martyr, rolling up his eyes, and saying:

" 'Fallen among thieves' again! They have seized me by violence! Taken away my hat and my coat! Carried off my horse and gig! Oh, Nat Pryor! Nat Pryor! where do you expect to go when you die?"

"Ahem! Where I shall not expect to see you, doctor, if you go on caluminating good Samaritans, and calling them thieves!" retorted the colonel.

Then both the old men burst into a simultaneous fit of laughter at the poor jest and repartee, neither of which would have found much favor in the ears of any but themselves, and only for each other's sake.

"But, really, colonel, I ought to be going home," exclaimed the doctor, when his laughter was over.

"But, really, doctor, you ought to be staying here. Now listen. The night is dark as the bottomless pit! And the roads, after the famous storm, as deep and dangerous, I was going to say. Besides, it is as cold as the depths of Dante's Inferno, which was a hell of ice, you know! But—— No, stop! Listen! The wind is going down, and the weather is moderating. At ten o'clock the moon will rise, and—there you are!"

"Here I am, you mean," retorted the doctor.

Indeed and in truth Dr. Bland had no objection to a few hours of rest and refreshment, both for himself in this congenial company, and for his poor, tired and hungry horse in the warm, well-foddered stable—but for this one consideration—the very morbid and unneighborly consideration, that during the severe weather of the last ten days he had trespassed too frequently on Col. Pryor's hospitality.

However, the cordial welcome with which he was

met, and the affectionate violence with which he was held fast, quite reassured him, and he gave himself up to the enjoyment of the evening.

Supper was soon served, with the addition of the red-hot, peppery stew that was always Jemima's evening offering to the cold and tired guest. And then followed the usual *tête-à-tête* games in three pairs.

At ten o'clock, when the moon rose over the eastern range of mountains, the horse, refreshed with rest and food, was put to the gig and brought round to the front door; the warm blankets were fetched from the kitchen fire, and the old doctor was rested; so, well wrapped up, he took leave of his friends, and, followed by Godfrey, who bade good-by to each, and took a tender farewell of Jemima, entered the gig, and drew the warm rugs over his knees.

Godfrey took the reins, and they set out for Mistyrock, where, after a rather pleasant moonlight drive of a couple of hours, they arrived safely at midnight.

The old doctor's house was on Main Street, and directly opposite the old inn which bore the name of "The George Washington Hotel" in large, black letters on a white ground, just beneath the likeness of his mad majesty, King George III.—in gold-laced coat, double waistcoat, stars and crosses, bag wig, narrow forehead, idiotic expression and all! Yet the children and negroes believed that it was a true portrait of the father of his country, though the old people knew that it was the picture of the king when the old hostelry was known as the "Royal George" of ante-revolutionary days, and economy retained the face after revolution had changed the name.

The doctor's house was a large, two-story, stone building, with piazzas running the whole width of the ground and upper floors of the front of the house. There was a front flower garden that contained nothing now

but the dry stems of the growth of the preceding summer.

As Godfrey drew the horse up to the gate that divided the fence midway, they observed a light burning under a red globe over a window of the doctor's office which was on the right side of the front door as they stood before it.

"That is my beacon light," said the doctor, as he left the gig and opened the gate. "But there is no one likely to be watching, unless it is David!"

"Henceforth, doctor, you shall always have a representative, though an unworthy one, in your absence from your office," warmly declared Godfrey.

"I am quite sure I shall be well pleased with my representative," courteously replied the doctor, as he opened the gate and bowed his companion into the front yard.

The door was opened by a negro woman, holding a dim, tallow candle in her hand. She was a little, slim, black creature, with a face like a dried prune, but lighted up by a pair of snapping black eyes. She wore a red turban, a yellow jacket and a dark green skirt, and was nicknamed by her fellows "Yellow Jacket" and "Red-headed Scorpion." This was on account of her minute size, her costume and the venomous sting of her tongue.

She was David's wife, and the doctor's housekeeper.

"Well, Dinah! Sitting up for me, my good woman? Where is David? Hasn't he got home yet?" cheerfully inquired the doctor, as he entered the house, followed by Godfrey.

"Yes, young marse, hours ago, sah! W'ich I should be bery much 'shame' ob my 'spect'ble old man, if he wer' ter git inter some w'ite ge'man's wices ob stayin' out inter all de onlawful hours ob de night," replied the little creature, tossing up her head with aggressive dignity.

The good-tempered doctor laughed as he turned the knob of the door on his right, and showed Godfrey into his office, followed by Dinah with the dim candle, that only partially revealed an obscurity of bood-lined walls.

"But where is David?" he repeated, ignoring the downright insolence of his domestic. "I want him to put up my horse and gig."

"W'ich I had sent my decent old 'panion ter bed, sah. He were too tired ter sit up inter all de ondecen' hours ob de night an' mornin' a-waitin' fo' ge'men as makes de habit ob so doin'."

Dr. Bland turned to Godfrey with a deprecating smile, saying:

"I am sixty years old. Yet as she 'toted' me about when she was a child and I was a baby, bullied me when she was a young girl and I but a schoolboy, and ordered me around when she was a married woman and I a youth, so she has tyrannized over me ever since! And she still calls me young marse! Talf of masters and slaves! Outsiders know very little of some of the phases of that relationship, Mr. Godfrey!"

"But I know all about it," replied the young man, with a laugh.

"I nebber does nuffin'; no, nor says nuffin', but w'at's fer young marse's own good. I has been a mudder ter him, I has," whimpered the tiny creature, putting her apron to her eyes.

"So you have, Dinah. So you have, my good woman. Never mind, I will go out and put up the horse myself," said the amiable doctor, moving to open the door again.

"No, no, sir! Just tell me where to find the stable, and let me do it," exclaimed Godfrey, starting up from the seat he had taken.

"Not at all. What! set you to work on the first night of your arrival?" demanded the doctor, moving on.

"I hoped to be as a son in your house, sir. Would

you not allow your son to perform this service for you? Nay, would you not expect him to do this bounden duty?" inquired Godfrey, in a tone of pain, which convinced the old doctor that the kindest thing he could do for the young man would be to make the most use of him.

"All right, my dear fellow. Come along with me. We will do the job together to-night, and after this you can do it as often as you like!" he said, leading the way out to the sidewalk, where the tired horse stood quietly between the shafts of the old gig.

The brightness of the moonlight was sufficient to show them the way to the stable.

When they had finished their task they returned to the house, and were again admitted by Dinah, with the candle in her hand.

"Want me any longer, young marse?" inquired the woman.

"No, my good soul. Go to bed at once," said the doctor.

"Well, den, good-night, young marse. Good-night, sah," said Dinah, and with a bow to each of the gentlemen she turned and began to climb the stairs to her den in the garret.

"Come this way, Godfrey," said the doctor, striking a match and opening the door of his office, which he entered, followed by the young man.

With his blazing match the doctor lighted a lamp hanging from the center of the ceiling, which illumined the whole room so that Godfrey saw for the first time the old physician's office.

It was a large, low-ceiled room, with wainscoted walls. Opposite the door by which they had entered was an open fireplace with a grate in which was burning a fine, coal fire; with a high mantel, on which were rows of medicine bottles, and above which hung a large line engraving of Hippocrates in a black frame. A faded

Turkish rug lay before the hearth; but for this the floor was bare. Two tall, narrow closets flanked the chimney, one on each side. The two high, front windows were hung with plain green shades. Between these windows stood the doctor's secretary—half bookcase, half writing desk.

All around the walls were shelves—the lower ones were filled with old books in dark, worn, leather binding; the upper ones with rows of medicine jars or bottles; for Dr. Bland, like many country practitioners, dispensed his own drugs.

In the middle of the room stood a large, round table of shining mahogany without a cloth, but well covered with the latest medical and surgical journals and magazines—for the old physician kept up with all the advance science of the day relating to his profession. There were two large, green leather armchairs conveniently near the table; and there was a broad, low, green leather lounge drawn up on one side of the fireplace.

Godfrey thought he had never seen a more restful and studious-looking room, nor yet one so free from dust and disorder, those two demons of studies and offices. But he also noticed that there were no carpets, curtains, table covers or tidies to collect the dust.

He would gladly have lingered, late as it was, to look over some of those new medical journals, closed treasuries of knowledge to him for so many years, but that the doctor opened a door in the back part of the room. and said:

"Here, my dear boy, is your bedchamber, communicating with the office, as you see," and forthwith showed him into a comfortably furnished back room, where the same simplicity in its fittings, and the same immaculate cleanliness, pervaded the whole scene. Bare floor, bare, whitewashed walls, white window shades; white bed, a bright, little coal fire in the grate; a man-

tel with a brass candlestick on each corner, and a little clock in the middle. A bureau with a looking-glass, a washstand and two green leather armchairs completed the appointments of the bedchamber.

Dr. Bland crossed the room and opened another back door leading out into a back porch, and thence, by a few steps, into the garden, saying:

"Here is a pleasant place to promenade on a fine day. Now that I have shown you your private domains, I will bid you good-night, my dear boy, and leave you to your rest."

"Not until I have thanked you again, my generous friend, for all the good you are doing me. What could I have done but for you!" gratefully breathed Godfrey.

"Divine Providence would have raised you up some other friend, my boy. Look you! I know the Godfreys by reputation, and, therefore, I know that their son may appropriate this text of the Psalmist: 'I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' And now, good-night, once more. Rest well!" said the old doctor, as he left the room, closing the door behind him.

Gilbert Godfrey sank on his knees beside the bed and returned thanks to God for the haven of safety he had found.

CHAPTER VII.

"THE YELLOW JACKET."

Oh, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!
And though she be but little, she is fierce!

—SHAKESPEARE.

Godfrey awoke early the next morning. The house seemed perfectly quiet, as if no one in it was yet astir.

Soon, however, he became aware of some movement in the next room, and soon after the communicating door was pushed open and old David came through, well laden with a pair of recently-cleaned boots, a hod of coal and a basket of chips. He crossed the room stealthily, deposited the boots by the bedside, and then went to work with the chips and coal to revive the expiring fire in the grate.

But the old man's movements were so painfully cautious, from his fear of disturbing the supposed sleeper, that Godfrey felt bound to relieve him by saying:

"Good-morning, Uncle David. I am awake, you see."

"Now, my Gor-a-mighty! has I woked you up, sah, arter all de pains I tuk not ter?" exclaimed the old negro, in a disappointed tone.

"No, indeed, you have not. I have been awake some time, and was just thinking about getting up. And now, Uncle David, let me tell you that you need not take the trouble to do this after to-day. But if you will leave a basket of chips and coal in the room overnight, I will make my own fire in the morning," said the young man, considerately.

"No, sah. I couldn' 'low yet ter do so, on no 'count, sah! I couldn', really," replied David, with dignity. "W'ich I hopes, sah, as yer wer' no ways 'fended long o' me fer not settin' up fer ter wait on yer w'en yer come in las' night," he added, deprecatingly, as he

busied himself with making up the fire; for no creatures can talk and work at the same time with more success than the negro.

"Of course I am not offended. Why should I be? It is none of my business. It is your master's," said the young man, with a smile at the earnestness of the old servant.

"Marse Doctor!" exclaimed David, raising his eyebrows and wrinkling his forehead, "why Lor-a-mighty bress yer soul, sah! Marse Doctor nebber takes no 'fense 'gin we ole cullud people. I did wahne ter set up ter wait on yo', sah! But dere! It wer' Dinah, sah; Dinah! She is de 'panion ob my pilg'imidge on earf! An' she is jis' de faifules' 'panion inter dis worl'! An' I aine gwine ter say a single word 'gin her! No, sah! But, oh! she's inguns, Dinah is! W'en she says, 'Ole man, go ter bed!' I jis' has ter go or catch it! Same way wiv Marse Doctor, sah. An' I wahnes yer, it'll be de same way wiv you, sah. Yer'll have ter be on yer P's an' Q's wiv Dinah, sah, or yer'll catch it!"

Godfrey wondered in what form he would be likely to "catch it," but did not express himself.

David continued to ventilate his own and his master's grievances.

"I is sorwy fer Marse Doctor! I jis' is dat sorwy fer de ole ge'men! Jis' ca'se she toted him roun' w'en she wer' a little gal an' he wer' a baby, she finks as how he 'longs to her, an' not her ter him. An' she finks she got de right ter rule ober him same as she do ober me! 'Umph—humph! But I aine gwine ter say one singl' word 'gin my lawful 'panion! Not one singl' word! But, oh, sah, she's a hornet, Dinah is! Dey calls her Yaller Jacket! Yer kno's w'at a yaller jacket is, sah?"

"A sort of stinging wasp, is it not?"

"Dat it is, sah! an' 'bout de stingies' as ebber yer

see! An' she's it, sah! An' pee-roud ob bein' it! W'at she wear dat yaller wais' body fer? An' den ag'in dey calls her Yed-headed Scorripin! Yer kno's w'at dat is, sah?"

"A poisonous tree scorpion, is it not?"

"Yes, sah! rank p'ison! An' she's it, too! an' pee-roud ob it, ca'se she wear dat yed turbin! Yes, sah, Dinah glorywises in makin' us 'fraid ob her, she do! Not as I'm gwine ter say anyfing ag'in my ole 'panion. No, sah! it wouldn't be right fer me ter do so! An' now, sah," said David, rising from the hearth, which he had just finished brushing up, "dere's fresh pump water in de pitcher, an' dere's clean towels, an' dere's yer boots all shined so bee-right yer mite see ter shave inter 'em! Yes, sah! An' w'ich I tuk 'em outen yo' room wivout ebber 'sturbin' ob yer, an' dere dey is! An' now, sah, de breakfass'll be ready in a hour. W'ich I wises ob yer not ter keep it waitin' ef yer doane wan' ter put Dinah inter a state ob mind! Ef yer does, we'll catch it, sah!"

With this parting caution, old David went out, and left Godfrey to ruminate on all that he had heard of the little black midget, whose "will was law," by which she ruled her master and his household.

That the refined, benevolent, generous Dr. Bland should tolerate the almost insufferable insolence of this little negress, who loved him devotedly, even while trying to rule him despotically, did not surprise the young man in the least, because it was perfectly consistent with the doctor's character to bear with an aggravating little creature who was so absolutely in his power.

But that stalwart old David—when negro husbands are proverbially tenacious of their marital authority—should live in such fear of his tiny wife was a puzzle!

Godfrey did not spend much time over his dress.

When ready to go out, he turned impulsively toward

the door by which he had entered the previous night from the doctor's office, but a moment's reflection suddenly suggested that the office was the doctor's *sanctum sanctorum,* not to be invaded without invitation, so he turned again, and left his room by the door leading out into the hall.

At the very same moment, the doctor, who must have heard his movements, came out from his office, and met him with a hearty:

"Ah, Godfrey, good-morning!"

"Good-morning, sir!" responded the young man.

"You are up early. I hope you slept well. You are aware, I suppose, that some people never can sleep the first night in a new house."

"I am not one of them, sir. I slept well, thank you. And you, sir?"

"Always," laconically responded the doctor. "And now, Godfrey, my boy, as you have seen the rooms on the right side of the hall—my office and your bedroom—I will show you those on the left."

And, so saying, Dr. Bland opened a door leading into a large, low-ceiled room, whose front windows were closed and curtained so that the whole place was in such obscurity that Godfrey only dimly perceived what must have been a highly polished, yellow-pine floor, spectral-white walls hung with dingy portraits, ghostly cabinets, stands and tables in the corners, and rows of stiff, high-backed chairs ranged along the sides. When his eyes had adjusted themselves to the semi-darkness, he discerned a broad, open fireplace, with great brass andirons, on which were piled logs of wood under which were stuffed kindlings ready to light, though they looked as if they might have been there, undisturbed, for that indefinite period alluded to as "time out of mind."

"This is my best parlor. My careful housekeeper keeps this room closed, because she insists that the light

spoils the furniture. Though what furniture there is here to be spoiled passes my powers of comprehension," said the doctor, with a laugh, as he led the way, followed by Godfrey, to a door at the back, which opened into the dining room.

This was a bright and cheerful apartment, with windows opening upon the back piazza and the bare garden, and into which the early morning sun shone cheerily. A roaring wood fire was burning in the open fireplace, over the mantelpiece of which hung an engraving of the Washington family, all too obviously sitting for their portraits.

The breakfast table was neatly set for two. And as Godfrey looked at it he thought how lonely the old doctor must have been all these years since the marriage and departure of his youngest daughter, and he silently prayed that he might become to his aged friend as a dutiful son and congenial companion.

Dinah was standing at one of the back windows doing something to the tassel of the dark shade, and, with her red turban, yellow jacket and green skirt, she formed a brilliant cluster of coloring in the room.

She turned around on the entrance of the two gentlemen, and courtesied in a perfunctory sort of way, and immediately opened the door on the left side of the room, leading to the kitchen, from which came appetizing odors of fragrant coffee, buckwheat cakes and bacon and eggs.

These were soon placed on the table, with hot plates. The two men sat down to breakfast.

Dinah stood and poured out the coffee, and then placed a hand bell at the side of the doctor's plate, and left them.

"You have kept up your studies, I can well believe, Godfrey?" said the doctor, in a slightly interrogative tone.

"I have, indeed, sir; with what books I could get. I

have also practiced a little, in emergencies, among Mrs. Horah's negroes, as well as among those on our own old farm in Maryland," replied the young man.

"I thought so. That is well. And now, Godfrey, you will brush up for your final examination, which you can pass during the coming spring. My office is entirely at your disposal. I noticed, by the way, you put your hand on the knob of the communicating door, and then, even before I could call you to come in, you left it, and came out of the hall door. Now, my dear boy, I wish you to understand that you are henceforth to make free use of my office. My books, my objects, instruments, specimens, my record of cases; and, of course, my counsel and assistance, are entirely at your service. And the more you use them and benefit by them the happier I shall be," said the doctor, so heartily that his tone and manner expressed even more angelic kindness than did his words.

"Oh, sir," began Godfrey, in a voice faltering with emotion, "your great goodness—to me, who have no claims on you—leaves me—powerless to express—my deep sense of gratitude! God grant I may be sometime able to prove it by something better than speech. If ever I——"

"There! there! there! my dear fellow! I am so happy at being able to serve a most worthy young man, and benefit myself—do you not see?—at the same time, that —that—that—well, there!" cried the old doctor, suddenly breaking down and ringing his hand bell, bringing in Dinah, whose snapping black eyes darted from one to the other of the friends, as she said:

"Yer's been 'citing ob yerse'f, young marse. Now I woane hab it! Yer heah me talk, doane yer?"

"Fill up our cups, Dinah! and permit me to excite myself over a piece of good fortune, once in a way. For it is a piece of good fortune for me, Godfrey, my boy,"

he added, reaching his hand across the table and grasping that of his companion.

Dinah obeyed orders, and then once more retired to the kitchen, only pausing before she closed the door to say:

"Now mine w'at I tell yer, young marse! I woane hab it."

"If I believed with the Buddhists in the penal and purgatorial transmigration of souls, I should certainly believe that Dinah's soul had once animated the body of some tyrant, and was now expiating her sins in the life of a slave," said the doctor, with a laugh.

"I do not quite see where the 'expiating' comes in for her, I must confess," exclaimed Godfrey. "It seems to me that she is quite as much of a tyrant as ever! and that it is her husband and master who do the expiating."

The doctor laughed good-humoredly, and soon after both gentlemen rose from the table and went into the office.

"There are my keys hanging up on that high peg," said the doctor, "I shall leave you in charge of the office to-day, to make acquaintance with its contents."

"Its treasures, sir! for so they seem to me," said Godfrey, gazing around upon the richly laden shelves, which, however, to an ordinary observer, would have seemed nothing better than an old second-hand bookshop.

"I have already spoken of you to several of my—well, chronic patients, and prepared them to receive you with confidence, at any time when I might not be able to attend them. And now, my dear boy, I will bid you good-morning, feeling quite at ease about you, being sure that you will improve your time and opportunities," concluded the old man, as he took his great-coat from the peg in the hall and began to struggle into it.

Godfrey sprang to his help, but was instantly brushed aside by Dinah, who suddenly made her appearance and sharply reminded him that she was there to wait upon her master.

Godfrey started back instinctively, as a man dodges a wasp. The doctor laughed merrily.

Godfrey attended the old physician out to his gig with all the reverential courtesy which might have been shown by a gentleman-in-waiting upon a king.

Old David was standing at his horse's head, waiting to drive his master.

As Godfrey assisted the doctor to get into his seat, the latter took his hand for a moment and said, with a half-amused, half-deprecating smile:

"My young friend, you will have to treat Dinah diplomatically. And let me tell you," he added, mysteriously, "that it will require all the diplomacy you are master of to manage her!"

Then, with a significant nod, he released Godfrey's hand, and the young man gave way to David, who climbed to the seat beside his master, gathered the reins in his hands, and with a polite bow to "de young doctor," as he already began to call Godfrey, started the horse for the long round.

Godfrey watched the gig until it disappeared around the shoulder of the hill, which was at the extremity of a range behind their own house. Then he stood a few minutes longer, breathing the keen, fresh, morning air, and looking out upon the street which was to be his home and the headquarters of his future labors.

The street was board, running through a narrow but elevated valley between opposite ranges of high hills.

The house, built of graystone dug from the mountain quarry near at hand, stood each in its own grounds, for land was plentiful and inexpensive in that region. Opposite was the old Washington House, with its incongruous King George swinging sign. A few feet above

stood the general store, where everything to wear could be bought, from overshoes to artificial flowers; everything to eat, from corned pork to candied fruit; everything to use, from a plow to a pincushion. A few feet below was the lawyer's office, in his own dwelling house. Still lower down the same side was the tailor's shop and the dressmaker's cottage.

There were very few passers-by at this season of the year, so Godfrey, after a short survey, turned and entered the silent house. He went straight into the office, which seemed to him a perfect treasure house of knowledge, with its invaluable books, objects, specimens and manuscripts. He closed and locked the door, and thought to explore it in undisturbed solitude unless some patient should call.

But, alas! Godfrey had reckoned without the Yellow Jacket. He had no sooner locked himself in and began his investigations than he heard a movement in his bedroom, and the door opened, and in came Dinah with her head tossed very high. She made her courtesy, however, but as if out of respect for herself rather than for the young gentleman. Then, standing with her arms folded, she commenced a strange exordium:

"I hopes as yer'll 'scuse me, sah; but short 'counts makes long fr'en's, an' it's de best way ter begin as we 'spects ter go on."

"Certainly!" assented Godfrey, repressing his inclination to laugh, as he seated himself in the large armchair. Then, pitying the age of the woman, which, however, she did not seem to feel at all, he pushed a chair toward her, and said:

"But will you not sit down? It is fatiguing to stand and talk."

"No, I t'ank yer, sah. I knows my place better'n dat! No, sah, I has too much 'spect fer myse'f an' de offis ter do dat. I kin talk well 'nouf standin'," she said, draw-

ing herself up more stiffly, and folding her arms more firmly than before.

"Go on, then," said Godfrey.

"Den, sah, ef you'll 'scuse me," she began, with more self-assertion in her manner than civility in her words, "I would like ter let yer inter der rules ob de hous' as it hab ben ruled ebber since I hab ben de housekeeper."

"Very well. No doubt it will profit me to know them."

"First an' fo'mos', I 'quires ebberybody ter be punctured at deir meals."

"Oh!"

"Yes, sah. I woane hab my cookin' sp'ilt!"

"You are right. What else?"

"Den I 'quires ob yer all ter sc'ape yer boots onter de sc'aper, an' wipe dem good onter de mat 'fore ebber yer steps inter de house. I woane hab my clean flo's dirtied."

"Right again. What else?"

"Den, sah, I 'ould 'quest ob yer ter hab a place fer ebberyfing an' ebberyfing inter its place, 'cordin' ter de Scripters. An' not ter be leabin' books on de chai's, an' drappin' handkerchers on ter de flo', 'case I hab got too much ter 'ten' ter fer ter be ebberlastin' trapsin' arter ge'men, pickin' up an' puttin' 'way."

"You will find me a perfect model of order, Dinah!" exclaimed the young man, no longer able to repress a smile.

"I hopes so, sah! An' dere's anodder fing, mo' se'ious dan all de yest," she said, solemnly.

"Oh, dear, dear me! What can that be?"

"Well, den, sah, I 'ould 'quest ob yer not ter be leadin' my marse inter bad habits in de ole age ob his pilg'midge."

"I thought you called Dr. Bland your young master," laughed Godfrey.

"Dat's my 'fair, ef yer'll 'scuse me fer sayin' ob it, sah! I called him dat w'en I used ter tote him roun'

an' I nebber see de day jis' w'en I could change. But I doane like his stayin' out late ob nights at his time ob life, an' mo'ober I woane hab it. An' now, sah, yer heahs w'at I say, an' I woane 'rupt yer enny longer."

And the Yellow Jacket left the room as abruptly as she entered it.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

When Godfrey was left alone in the doctor's office his first thought was:

"What can I do for my friend?" For in the young man's true heart benefits engendered gratitude, affection and aspiration to serve the benefactor.

He looked around upon the rows above rows of old volumes that loaded the shelves which lined the walls halfway from floor to ceiling.

Neat, clean and orderly as was everything in the office, a slight review of the titled backs of the books showed him that they might need classifying, and, perhaps, cataloguing; but he would not take the liberty of changing the place of any volume without the doctor's sanction. He would ask Dr. Bland to allow him to classify and catalogue the books, if the latter thought proper.

Then he began to examine the volumes. He was tempted to please himself with the rare and priceless old tomes which were, perhaps, more valuable as curiosities—for certainly the medical books of the earlier centuries could teach but little to the student of the nineteenth, however curious and interesting to the antiquarian they might be. And he had no time to please himself. He had to read up for examination.

He found that the doctor had all the latest editions

of the standard text-books. He took down one and seated himself to read. The book that engaged him was a work on anatomy. The chapter he began with treated of bones. In the course of his study he had occasion to refer to the human skeleton, which, he thought, must be locked up in one of the tall closets that flanked the fireplace.

He took the doctor's bunch of keys and unlocked the one nearest the window; but that was filled with shelves containing glass jars, and bottles of chemicals, and so forth.

"I might have known he would not keep his skeleton so near the window," said Godfrey to himself, as he relocked the door and went to the other closet, that was next to the wall of his own room. He opened the door, and there he found the ghastly wreck of man, well mounted.

He was about to take it down when a loud knocking came to the door of the office, and the shrill voice of Dinah was heard calling:

"Sah! sah! Yer's wanted ober ter de tavun dere! A boy done fall an' cut his head open! An' dey say ef de doctor ain't yere dey wan's his 'sistant."

Godfrey hastily closed and locked the door, but did not withdraw the key. He hurried out into the hall and confronted Dinah, with a colored man from the Washington House.

"P'ease come at once, sah! De boy's mons'ous bad!"

Without stopping to ask questions, Godfrey stepped back into the office, seized a small pocket case of surgical instruments that he thought might be needed, snatched his hat, and hurried after his conductor.

Dinah lingered at the door, with the double curiosity of her sex and race, and watched Godfrey and the messenger until both disappeared into the hotel. She was about to reënter the house and close the door when she saw a little, very black, old man, with a head of bushy

white hair, coming up the street toward the house. Then she stopped to watch him, and soon recognized him to be old Josias, the negro minstrel of Horah Hall.

"Mornin', Mis' Dinah," said the old man, politely, as he came up to the door.

"Mornin', Mist' Sias. W'at fetches yer inter town so airly?"

"I jis' wahne ter see de doctor, Mis' Dinah. Kin I do so?" deprecatingly inquired old Si—for he, like all her acquaintances, stood in great awe of the Yellow Jacket.

"No, yer jis' can't, 'cause de doctor hab done gone onter his roun's, an' his 'sistant hab gone ober ter de tavun ter sew up a boy's head w'at got it split open," said Dinah.

"Well, den, Mis' Dinah, would yer obligate me by lettin' me hab de honah ob settin' by yer kitchen fire till one or t'oder ob dem come home?" pleaded Si.

"No, sah! I couldn' no ways in de worl'! 'Cause I'se got too much 'spect fer myse'f, let 'lone my 'spec'ble ole man, ter 'low cullud ge'men ter be a wisitin' ob me in my kitchen w'en he aine by," said the Yellow Jacket, throwing back her head with great assumption of dignity.

"Lor-gor-a'mity, Mis' Dinah! Sho', I begs yer pardin'! I nebber meant no harm!" pleaded Si, in some confusion. "De ole fool finks as I wahne ter make lub ter her—her!—w'en dere's boo'ful Delphy, an' lubly Servy!" he mentally added.

"Weel, w'at is yer stoppin' yere fer? I tells yer yer can't come inter my kitchen w'en my ole man's out! Dere!" exclaimed Dinah.

"But, my Lor-a-massy, Mis' Dinah! W'at's I gwine ter do? I hab come all de way f'om Horah Hall fer ter see de doctor, an'—an', 'deed, it's a 'fair ob life an' deaf wif me! 'Deed it is, Mis' Dinah!" pressed Si, in much distress.

"Life an' deaf? W'at de matter 'long ob yer, ole man?" inquired the woman, somewhat mollified by the implied case of serious illness.

Old Si paused in some embarrassment, and then hesitatingly answered:

"I yeally doane know, Mis' Dinah. I'se chubbled wiv a sinkin' ob my heart, an' a sort ob a kine ob a 'fusion inter my head"—"an' dat aine no false, nudder, fer I nebber wer' dat downhearted, ner boddered in my lif' as I is now, an' de Lor' knows it!" he mentally added.

"Yer's billus! Go home an' take some calomy an' jallup, an' yer'll be all right," snapped the woman.

"Oh, no, Mis' Dinah! It aine dat, 'deed it aine! P'ease, ma'am, lemme stay 'roun' yere somew'ere I kin set down a' res' myse'f till de doctor comes," prayed Si.

"Well, den, ef yer's so 'sistin', yer kin come inter de doctor's office an' wait dere fer him. I'se gwine down stai's ter clean my tu'key fer yoastin'," said Dinah; and she turned and conducted the little old man into the house and into the office.

"Now," she said, with sharp emphasis, "you set right down dere on dat dere stool, an' 'have yerse'f! An' doane yer tetch nuffin'! Jis' yer keep yer han's ter yerse'f! Yer better had! Dere aine nuffin' inter dis worl' mo' dange'ous dan meddlin' 'long ob doctor's fings! Yer heah me, doane yer?" demanded Dinah.

"Yes, ma'am," meekly responded Si, obediently seating himself on a low hassock.

"An' doane yer 'sume ter come 'trudin' inter my kitchen! Yer heah dat, doane yer?" And, with this parting injunction, the Yellow Jacket left the office, closing the door behind her.

Si twisted his head around, looking out of the corners of his eyes, and listening until the sound of Dinah's footsteps died away in the rear of the dining room; then he restorted his neck to its perpendicular,

placed his hands on his knees, and heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"Me 'trude inter her kitchin! Well, Lor'! I'd jis' as leeb 'trude inter a hornet's nes'! Me 'trude! Well, Lor'! 'Ow enybody kin lib in de same house 'long ob Dinah bodders me! An' she fink I wahned ter make lub to her! He! he! he! I's jus' es leeb make lub ter a wild cat! Dat ole dried-up wi'ch! Lor'! Oh, de wanity ob wimmen! But I kno's one fing—I aine no fool—I kno's as how ef ebber I come fer ter lib inter de same house 'long ob Dinah I shill hab ter 'tend ter be wiolent in lub 'long ob her! I shill hab ter put her onte de banjo, in a redhot lub song—somefin' like dis yere—le's see:

"'Dinah! deares', ducky, darlin' dove!
Pretty pearl an' pet an' pink ob lub!'

"Yes, dat'll do! Somefin' like dat'll fetch de ole sca'crow! Oh, w'at a gif' poet'y is! An' how 'sponsible I do feel fer it sumtimes!" sighed the minstrel.

"But it shan't go no furder dan singin' an' playin'—no, it shan't! I'se a 'onerable man, I is, ef I did come f'om Horah Hall! I aine like none ob dem coffee-cullud niggers w'at aine gat no p'inciples w'ere de fai' sex is 'cerned! An' as ter Dinah! Lor'! I'd rudder kiss a nettle, or a lump ob assyfeddity!" mused old Si, as he turned uneasily around on his low seat and began to look with curious interest about the office.

The walls lined with books filled him with amazement.

"Well, de Lor'!" he exclaimed. "I nebber t'ought as dere was so many books inter de whole worl' befo'!"

Slowly glancing around, as if he feared spying by Dinah's terrible eyes, he rose from his seat and began to wander about the room, looking at the books and specimens, et cetera, but religiously refraining from touching anything.

Then he began to wonder what was in the closets. Cautiously he went to the one next to the window. He only wanted to look in. He would not have meddled with any of its contents for the world! But the door was fast locked.

"Umph—umph! Somefin' mouty cu'ious in dere, I yeckon!" he said.

And then he crept over to the other closet. This, also, was locked, but the key was in the door. Si meant no harm. He was in the pursuit of knowledge, not booty. He turned the key and opened the door. And then——

"Ah-h-h-h-h! Mur-r-r-der-r-r-r!"

The yell that broke from him seemed to spilt the walls of the room, and startled Dinah in her distant kitchen.

This was what happened: As the negro pulled open the door, the skeleton, not secure to its fastenings, but loosely locked in by Godfrey in his haste to go to the assistance of the injured boy, fell suddenly forward upon him, with the bone of one arm over his shoulder, the finger bones of the other hand entangled in his bushy hair, and the skull resting upon his face.

Si's yell pierced the heavens as he fell on his knees, bringing the frightful thing down over him like a coop. Then his roars redoubled and rose louder and louder than before! He seemed to have no idea of helping himself but by howls and shrieks.

"Ah-h-h! Yah-h-h! Mur-r-r-der-r-r-r!"

Soon hurried footsteps were heard rushing along the hall, and Dinah burst into the room. She saw at a glance what had happened, and poured out the vials of her wrath on the prostrate wretch under the clutches of the skeleton.

"Oh, yer owdacious willan! I tole yer so! De debbil hab got yer at las'! I is glad ob it! Now he kin keep yer!"

"Oh, Mis' Dinah, fer de Lor'-a'mity sake, take it

offen me! Ah-h-h-h! Mur-r-r-rder!" yelled Si, so terrified, so paralyzed, so utterly demoralized that he did not seem to be aware that a slight effort of his own could throw off the horrible incubus.

Dinah would have seen him fall in a fit before she would have raised a hand or spoken a word to help him. But at this moment help was near.

The front door opened, then the office door, and Godfrey entered, stood for a moment in grave displeasure, and inquired:

"What is all this disgraceful noise?"

"Oh, Marse Godf'ey! Fer de Lor'-a-massy sake, take it offen me, sah, an' I nebber woane do so no mo'! Ah-h-h-h! Mur-r-r-r-der-r-r-r!"

Godfrey lifted the skeleton from the cowering wretch and returned it to the closet and locked it in.

"Oh, t'ank Gor-a-mity! T'ank Gor-a-mity!" puffed and bowed Si, as he wiped the cold perspiration from his face and tried to struggle to his feet.

"How did all this happen?" inquired Godfrey, still in displeasure, for it grieved him to think that the very first day he was left in charge of the doctor's office such a scene of disorder should have occurred.

"Well, sah, dis nigger f'om Horah Hall, w'ere yer come f'om yerse'f, sah," put in Dinah, aggressively, "come yere ter' sult de doctor 'cernin' his helf. An' as I nebber 'low no man wisitors inter my kitchen w'en my ole man is absun, I puts dis nigger in yere an' 'monished ob him to 'have hisse'f, an' not touch nuffin'! But no sooner my back turned dan he went p'owlin' 'round ter see w'at he could steal."

"'Deed an' 'deed! The Lor'-a-amity kno's I nebber meaned ter steal nuffin'! I were jis' chyin' ter 'prove my mine, Marse Godf'ey!" pleaded Si.

"He were chyin' ter steal sumfin'. I kno' he were," persisted Dinah.

Poor Si made no further defense, but looked up si-

lently, deprecatingly, appealingly to the face of the young gentleman.

Godfrey promptly responded to that mute appeal.

"And I am quite sure that he was not," he replied. "I have been intimately acquainted with this old man for several years, and a more honest, trustworthy and faithful creature I never met."

"T'anky, Marse Godf'ey! T'anky, sah! Lor'-a-mity bress yer fer dat!" cried Si, with his fists in his eyes, for he had not yet recovered from the shock which had temporarily shattered his nerves.

"Hab it yer own way! Settle it 'tween yer! 'Stroy de doctor's office, as I 'specks yer will! I washes my han's ob it!" buzzed the Yellow Jacket, flying out of the room.

"Lor'! Lor'! Lor'!" moaned poor Si. "Who could lib in a house 'long ob dat wile 'oman—an'—an'—an' de bone man, Deaf?"

"Compose yourself, my good friend, and tell me what brought you here," said Godfrey. "Are you really ill?"

"Not in body, Marse Godf'ey. But powerful chubbled in mind—yes, sah!" sighed the little old man.

"Tell me your trouble, then, Si, and let me see if I can help you," said Godfrey, kindly.

"Well, Marse Godf'ey, Ise 'couraged ter ax yer fer a recommend fer me ter chy ter fine a new mars'er. I aine as youn' as I use ter be, but I reckon I kin fe'ch water, an' saw wood, an' bresh closes an' shine boots an' shoes, an' 'ten' horses, an' dribe ca'ges, an' sich; an' is willin' ter do all dat, an' mo', too, fer my wittles dis winter, an' in de sp'ing, p'ease de Lor', I kin git work on de fa'ms."

"What, Si! Is it possible you have left Horah Hall?" inquired Godfrey, in much surprise.

"Yes, Marse Godf'ey, sah, I has. But, sah, mout I set down? I has b'en jis' so opset as I'd like ter set down."

"Certainly, Si! Take a chair," said Godfrey, pleasantly.

"T'anky, sah," sighed the old man, as he resumed his seat on the hassock, and then continued his story.

"Yes, sah, I hab lef' ole Horah! I aine runned away. Trufe, I were boaned an' raised onter de Horah plantation, an' so were all o bmy fo'faders an' fo'mudders f'om de time of No' an' Ham down ter dis day. Yes, sah! An' ye knows, Marse Godf'ey, as I 'longed ter mist'ess, an' how she lef' me f'ee, Lor' bless her! 'cause yer heahed de will read. So I aine no runaway nigger, w'at's dey puts in de papers. No, sah, I aine! But I have lef' ole Horah fer ebber, an' I'd jis' starbe an' freeze ter deaf fo' ebber I'd go back; but I aine run away. Dey can't say dat ob me, kin dey, now, sah?" inquired Si, with perceptible uncertainty in his tone and manner.

"No, certainly they cannot," replied Godfrey, reassuringly.

"An' I wouldn' come 'way, nohow, ef it hadn' b'en fer Marse Murdok comin' home. I couldn' stan' him, no, sah! not wiv no mist'ess, neider."

"But how will your poor companions endure the bitter bondage?" inquired Godfrey.

"Dey aine gwine ter try, sah! Dey's gone, dey is!"

"Gone!"

"Yes, sah!"

"Where, in the name of Heaven, have they gone? Where could they go at this season?" demanded Godfrey, in consternation.

"Anyw'ere, 'way f'om dere."

"Si," exclaimed Godfrey, with some severity in his tone, "do you mean to tell me that the poor colored people have all fled from Horah Hall in this terrible winter weather?"

"Dey has, sah! Everyone ob dem 'cept Cely, an' dey's inter de han's ob de Lor'! I tell yer, Marse Godf'ey,

nuffin' kin happen ter dem out yonder to compa' wiv w'at 'ould happen 'long ob Marse Murdok Horah!"

"Where have they gone?"

"Dey's marchin' fer de f'ee Norf, sah."

"Merciful God! They will all perish with cold and hunger!" exclaimed Godfrey.

"Dey's willin' ter resk it, sah! They ca'ed 'way all dey kin tote, too."

"This is the very height of madness! When did they start?"

"Yesserday, sah! 'Mejitly arter yer lef' yerse'f dey sot ter work like dey was crazy an' pack all der fings, an' as much wittles as dey could tote, an' 'way dey went like de debble were arter dem. W'ich he was, sah, an' I doane mine sayin' ob it now I has lef'."

"At what hour did they leave their homes—poor, unfortunate creatures?"

"Jis' at dark, sah. Ob coase dey waited fer dat, fo' feah dey mout be stopped. Dey means ter hide in de woods an' caves in de daytime an' trabble at nighttime."

Godfrey groaned and painfully speculated whether it would be the worst calamity for them to perish in the wilderness, as they were likely to do, or to be recaptured and carried back and given over to the power of an enraged and unscrupulous master. Upon the whole, he thought the first fate much to be preferred to the last. But his heart ached for the wretched negroes.

"God help them!" he thought. "We can do nothing for them. If they should be taken and brought back, the vengeance of Murdok Horah would make their last state far worse than their first."

Then, turning to the old ma[illegible] [illegible] still sat on the hassock, he said:

"As for you, Si, I feel nearly sure that the doctor will take you into his service. I heard him say something about getting another elderly man to help David,

if he could find one to suit him. You shall not want my good word for you."

"T'anky, Marse Godf'ey! T'anky, sah! I'm ebber so much obligated ter yer, sah!" fervently declared Si.

"I am really pleased to have the opportunity of serving you," kindly replied Godfrey. Then, after a pause, he inquired: "Is there anything else you wish to say to me? Anything else I can do for you?"

"No, sah! Nuffin' at this p'esent time ob speakin', sah. Nuffin', t'ank yer," answered the old man, but without taking the hint to retire which Godfrey meant to convey.

"Then, if there is nothing further to detain you, Uncle Sias," said the young man, with cautious politeness, "you are at liberty to retire to the kitchen, and have a little visit with Dinah until the doctor comes home and is at leisure to speak to you."

But the change that here came over Si's countenance would have been appalling if it had not been even more ludicrous. He rolled his eyes and clasped his hands, and his knees trembled, as he pleaded:

"Oh, my Lor'-gor-a'mity, Marse Godf'ey, sah! Doane sen' me down dere 'long ob dat Yellow Jacket, sah! I'd a heap rudder be shet inter de closet 'long ob dat bone man, Deaf! Leas'ways," he added, in sudden fear lest his suggested alternative might be accepted, "I'd 'mos' as lieb!"

"Very well, then," said the good-humored Godfrey, "stay where you are, but don't talk to me, and keep very quiet, for I wish to read."

"I t'ank yer, Marse Godf'ey, sah, but I woane interyupt yer no mo' at p'esent; but I jis' take a walk 'roun' de willidge, an' see some ob my cullud 'quaintances, sah," said Si, rising from his seat.

"Very well. And if you get back by three o'clock you will be in time to see the doctor," said Godfrey.

"T'anky, Marse Godf'ey! T'anky, sah! I'll be in

good time. Yes, sah! Good-day, sah, till I sees yer ag'in, sah," said the polite old negro, with a deep bow, as he left the room.

CHAPTER IX.

JOSIAS' TERMS.

Godfrey drew his chair nearer to the table and took up his work on anatomy, and settled himself for two or three hours' close reading.

He was not interrupted again until the old doctor returned from his professional rounds; and by that time he was weary enough of reading to lay aside his book with a sense of relief.

Dr. Bland was home a little earlier than usual. He left his gig and horse to be looked after by David, and came in from his long drive through the frosty air, bustling, rosy and cheerful, and entered his office with a hearty:

"Well, my boy! How goes it with you? What sort of a day have you had?"

"A very pleasant one, on the whole, sir. I will tell you all about it when you are comfortable," replied the young man, as he rose and relieved the old physician of his heavy overcoat—this time without the interference of Dinah—and drew the easiest armchair before the blazing wood fire.

When Dr. Bland was comfortably seated, Godfrey gave him, as his first report, an account of the case of the stable-boy over at the Washington House, who had slightly cut his head, and was more frightened than hurt, and required only a few strips of sticking plaster, which had been promptly applied. Then he told him about Si's visit and the terrible adventure with the skeleton.

Dr. Bland was not given to laughter, but at this story he broke into a roar of cachinnations that fairly shook his sides.

"Oh!" he cried, when his paroxysm was over, "that has done me good! I have not laughed so much for ten years! I must tell this to Nat Pryor! By the way, I called there on my way home, just to see how they all were, and to hear whether the heir—Heaven save the mark!—had got home. I found them all in excellent health and spirits. They sent the warmest regards to you, my boy."

"And Horah—has he returned?" inquired Godfrey.

"No, not yet, though he was due yesterday, you know; but Col. Pryor received a letter from him this morning, directing that a carriage should be sent from Horah Hall to meet him at the station this evening in time for the seven-o'clock train."

"Directing?" scornfully repeated Godfrey.

"Oh, yes! You see that, presuming on the colonel's long service of pure friendship for the widow, he pretends to consider Pryor, of The Notches, as a salaried agent of Horah Hall plantation. There is absolutely no limit to the egotism, arrogance and effrontery of that man. He seems on the border land of some infernal madness. He is a strange, but not an attractive, psychological study to me," said the doctor, thoughtfully.

"Many individuals are more or less that," observed the younger man, thinking of one under the doctor's own roof.

"Yes," assented the old physician, reverting to cases under his own notice in the course of his long life.

"Of course, Col. Pryor took no notice of Horah's insolent letter?" inquired Godfrey, falling back on the previous question.

"You know Nat Pryor. He passed the letter around in his good-humored way, laughed at it heartily, and

then called up Tim and ordered him to drive over to Horah Hall and tell Brush to meet his master at Half-down Junction at seven this evening."

"No!" exclaimed Godfrey, in disgust.

"Yes, though both Noll and Jemima expostulated with him. He said that he could not let the young fool arrive at that hour in the dead of winter at that lonely junction, where no conveyance was to be had for love or money, without sending some one to meet him. I tell you what, Godfrey, Nat Pryor obeys the law of the Divine Master, to return good for evil, better than any man I know!"

"And Tim went to give the order at Horah Hall?"

"So they told me at The Notches this afternoon."

"Well, it will be a useless errand," said Godfrey.

"What do you mean?" inquired the doctor, elevating his eyebrows.

"That there will be no one at Horah Hall capable of executing the order, that is all."

"Still I do not comprehend," said the perplexed doctor.

"History repeats itself! There has come within the last four-and-twenty hours a modern instance, on a small scale, of the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, of the flight of a Tartar tribe before the face of the czar."

"Godfrey, my boy, you speak in riddles!"

"I will give the answer. All the negroes have fled from Horah Hall in a mass."

"God of heaven!" exclaimed Dr. Bland, not profanely, but most reverently, most compassionately.

"It is terrible, indeed," assented Godfrey.

"When did they go? Where do they hope to find refuge?" inquired the doctor, deeply moved.

"Heaven only knows! But I will tell you all I have heard from Si, who is my informant," said Godfrey.

And he then related the grievous story that was so likely to have a tragic termination.

"Merciful God! What will become of them? The women! The little children!" groaned Dr. Bland, from the depths of his sympathetic heart.

"Can nothing be done for them, sir?" inquired Godfrey.

"What is possible? If they could be overtaken and brought back, it would be but to fall into the hands of an infuriated master, who would torture them to the verge of death—torture them until they should cry for death to put an end to their agony, in punishment for their great crime in trying to escape from an insufferable tyrant!"

"Yes if they should not be recovered they must perish with cold and hunger."

"They are in the hands of divine Providence," said Dr. Bland, using the very same words that ignorant old Si had uttered.

"And yet I feel guilty of their blood—I know not why."

"And so do I, my boy. I know not why, either, except that I am of the same race of him who oppresses them. But how is it that the man Si is here in Mistyrock?"

Godfrey explained that Si had been emancipated by the will of his mistress, and had left Horah Hall to seek service, preferably with the doctor himself.

"If that is so, I will willingly engage the old man as assistant to David," said the doctor.

Here Dinah entered the room, made her perfunctory courtesy, and announced that dinner was ready.

The two men went out to the dining room and seated themselves at the table, supplied with a winter dinner that might have satisfied the most fastidious epicure.

Not until an hour after dinner did Si make his appearance. It seemed that he had been entertained by

his colored friends in the village, whom he, in his turn, had entertained with his banjo. But now he came to hear his fate. When he knocked timidly at the front door, dreading to be confronted by the Yellow Jacket, he was admitted by David, who, when not driving his master, or attending to his horses, acted as general waiter in the house.

"Hello, Misser Sias Horah! De sight ob yer is good fer so' eyes! W'at fotch yer ter town?" was the cheery greeting of David.

"Ebenin', Misser David Blan'! See de doctor, sah! W'ich he 'spec's me. Yes, sah!"

"Come in, den. He's in de offis, smokin', 'long ob de youn' ge'men," said David. And he ushered the visitor to the office door and opened it with all the politeness he could have shown to a distinguished patient, and then retired.

Si entered, bowing, and saying, deferentially:

"Sarvint, Marse Dr. B'and, sah. Sarvint, Marse Godf'ey, sah." And then stood humbly, hat in hand.

Dr. Bland, who, in the kindness of his heart, disregarded conventionalities, and never thought of compromising his own dignity, said:

"Good-evening, Josias. Take that chair and sit down, and tell us what we can do for you."

"T'anky, sir," replied meek Si, with a bow, as he took the offered seat.

And then he told the same tale that he had previously told, and made the same offer of service, on the same terms, that he had made to Godfrey in the morning.

The doctor replied:

"I am sorry, very sorry, that your poor friends have made such a fatal mistake as to take flight at this inclement season of the year. I fear that, however it ends, in recapture or not, the consequences must be calamitous to them."

Si moaned softly, but said nothing.

"As for yourself Josias, I will gladly take you into my service, but not on the terms you offer."

Poor Si looked up in alarm.

"Was not his work worth his wittles?" he asked himself. If not, where were his "wittles" to come from? The next words of the doctor relieved him.

"'The laborer is worthy of his hire,' Josias, saith Holy Writ. I think you are quite equal to work, and deserving of pay. Now, how much shall I pay you by the month?"

"T'anky, Marse Doctor, sah! T'anky! Wot ebber yer say yerse'f, sah, will be right," said Si, with his most polite bow.

"Not at all. I wish you to name your own terms," insisted the doctor.

Si scratched his white hair in sore perplexity, and looked from the doctor to Godfrey, as if to glean some hint of what he should say; but as no such index was forthcoming, he scratched his head again, hesitated, gasped, and said:

"Well, den, Marse Doctor, 'long as yer 'fers de subjec' ter me, 'ould yer fink as"—and here the meek voice sank, became faint almost to inarticulation—"as two—dollar—a mont'—'ould be—'stortionate?" And he looked up deprecatingly.

The doctor pursed up his lips to prevent laughter, and sternly replied:

"Yes; wickedly extortionate—on my part," he added to himself.

"I begs yer pard'n, Marse Doctor, sah!" humbly replied Si. "But, 'deed, I dunno nuffin' 'bout wages, sah. I mus' leabe it ter yerse'f, sah. Yer see, I nebber had ter go out an' git a libbin' befo', sah—nebber! I leabes it ter yerse'f, sah."

Thus appealed to, the doctor named a small sum which, though moderate, was as much as he could afford to pay; more than any of his neighbors would

have paid, and very much more than poor Si ever dreamed of asking.

"Will that—with your board and lodging, of course—be satisfactory, Josias?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, Marse Doctor, sah! I shill be a rich man wif all dat money! I—I hopes I aine 'mittin' no sin takin' so much money! Does yer fink I is, Marse Godf'ey, sah?" he inquired of the young man, as a disinterested third party.

"Certainly not, if you earn it faithfully, Si," decided this court of appeal.

"I'll b'eak my back, but wot I'll earn it! I'll sarve ye fai'ful, Marse Doctor, sah! I'd work my fingers ter de bone fer yer. Lor'-a'mity knows as I will."

"I have no doubt you will do your duty, Josais. And, now, when can you begin your service?" inquired the doctor.

"Dis berry minit, sah! W'ich I foch my duds in a bundle 'long wif me an' lef' it hid unner de steps ob de f'ont do'. Wot'll I do, sah? Fetch in some wood, or wot?" zealously inquired Si, starting to his feet, eager to show his gratitude.

"Nothing just at present. Since you are so ready to set in, I must see about your accommodation. I must call up Dinah."

"Oh, Lor'! Marse Doctor!" wailed Si, dropping down again into his chair, all his joy and zeal evaporated.

"Now, look here, my good fellow," said the doctor, smiling, "you need not be afraid of Dinah. Her bark is worse than her bite. She will never do you the least bodily harm. Why, she never beats her husband, who is her natural prey!"

"But her eyes, Marse Doctor! Dey sticks a body t'rough an' t'rough!"

"Then a body need not look at her eyes."

"An' her tongue, sah! Oh!"

"Well, bad words break no bones. You need pay no

attention to her tongue. Come, Josias, be reasonable! If you enter my service, you will have to live in the same house with this woman, and you will have to make the best of her."

"I knows dat, sah! I knows dat!" moaned Si, with the pious resignation of a saint.

"And, oh! I forgot to suggest it, Josias. You are, I hear, a fine singer and player on the banjo. Dinah adores music. Play to her on the banjo."

"T'anky, sah. Yes, sah, I did fink ob dat, too," assented Si, with a deep breath of relief.

The doctor rang his bell. David answered it.

"Send Dinah here," said the doctor.

David withdrew, and Dinah came in. She courtesied to the gentlemen after her old-fashioned manners, and glared viciously at the negro. But Si, remembering the doctor's advice, dropped his eyes and declined to be impaled.

"Dinah," said the doctor, "you know Josias?"

Dinah tossed her head, as much as to intimate that she knew no good of him; but the doctor went straight on, without noticing her gesture:

"I have engaged him to help in the house and the stables—in fact, to make himself generally useful for the present. His special work may be looked after later. Show him into the kitchen, and make him comfortable. And fix up some room in the garret for his sleeping place."

"Berry well, sah," said Dinah, with another toss of her head that boded no good to Si.

"Come 'long, nigger!" And she sailed out of the room, with her nose pointed to the zenith, followed by Si.

CHAPTER X.

MURDOK HORAH'S RETURN.

Expectation whirls me round;
Th' 'maginary relish is so sweet
That it enchants my sense.—SHAKESPEARE.

It was not, as might have been expected, the pleasures of New York City that had detained Murdok Horah on his journey and delayed his arrival at the time he had set to be at Horah Hall. It was his own impecuniosity. He had spent nearly all his money. The thousands that would have been a fortune to a temperate planter in Virginia were but a trifle to a dissipated spendthrift in Paris.

On his homeward voyage he had gambled and had been unlucky. On his arrival in New York he found that he had very little more funds than would take him as far on his way to Horah Hall as Washington. So he set out immediately for the national capital, and arrived there early in the evening. He had a whole night before him in which to think over his affairs.

He had not the slightest intention of remaining at his ancestral home. After reveling in the wildest dissipations of the French capital, the idea of a country life was abhorrent to him. He had only come back to sell out to the best advantage, then take Zenobia de Leon as his legal ward, and return with her to Paris. His passion for the beautiful young Spanish maiden had not subsided. Temporary frustration had but added fuel to its flames. He gloried and gloated in the anticipation of getting her in his absolute power, and in taking her to Europe with him and showing her off to his companions in Paris, Baden-Baden, Mentone and other headquarters of wealth, fashion and dissipation.

He was eagerly impatient to realize all these brilliant and delightful dreams.

He hoped to be able to complete his business and get off to the outward-bound steamer—with Zenobia de Leon in his power—within a week. But he must have money immediately, even to pay his way down to Horah Hall. He must raise it some way in Washington. He could do nothing that night; he must wait for morning. He could not sleep for thinking of his plans until he had stupefied himself with brandy.

It was late in the morning when Horah awoke from his drunken sleep with a heavy headache. At another time he would have indulged himself by lying in bed and smoking; but on this occasion he was too eager to realize his dreams of love and lucre for any such repose. He rang for soda water and strong coffee, took a warm bath, and afterward even ate a hearty breakfast.

Then, after making inquiries about the place, he ordered a carriage and drove over to the island, to the slave pen. He found on his arrival there that the pen was only a place of detention for slaves, and not a mart; and that it was only at times a trader was to be found there. There was none on the premises at that time. He was referred to the mart at Alexandria. Thither he went by steamboat. When he reached the wharf at the foot of King Street he inquired his way, and went to the slave mart in the suburbs of the city. There he found a trader by the name of Marman—a big, burly, red-faced, loud-voiced man of about forty years of age. To him Horah introduced himself and explained his business.

Marman then invited the stranger into his office, gave him a chair, took another himself, and viewed Horah with much interest and more sagacity. He saw before him a young fellow who had just come into his estates

and was impatient, for some reason or other, to get rid of them.

When the heir explained his wishes with more detail, and asked for an answer, the trader, who saw his opportunity to make a good thing out of the young fool, hemmed and hawed, and talked of the injury he would be doing to his own business if he should leave town at present—the overstocked state of the slave market, and so forth. And not until Horah rose in some displeasure and said that he would try Baltimore did the trader consent to accompany him to Horah Hall to view the negroes the owner wished to dispose of.

Then Horah mentioned his losses at cards, and hinted at an advance which should be refunded at Mistyrock in the event that the trader should not decide to purchase the negroes. This did not cost Murdok Horah the pang it would have inflicted on a more sensitive man.

The trader readily consented to the advance, which, however, he would never have risked had he not known the Horahs by reputation to be financially sound, and so he felt quite sure of his game.

It was arranged that they should start the next morning for Mistyrock.

At nine o'clock they met at the railroad depot and set out on their journey. On that route there were several changes of trains, and some delay, so that they were many hours on the road. The trains were not crowded at that season of the year, and they got seats together all the way.

Between the brandy flasks, the smoking car and much confidential conversation on the business that occupied their minds they managed to beguile the time.

Murdok Horah gave a flattering description of the slaves he proposed to exhibit to the trader. There was Servia, a handsome quadroon, aged about thirty years, really well educated, invaluable as a lady's maid, or a

bachelor's or a widower's housekeeper. There was Celia, a strong mulatto of about forty. There was Brush, invaluable as a family coachman. Cindy, to be sure, was old, but with a good twenty years' service in her yet. And such a cook! But Mr. Marman should judge of that for himself. He, Murdok Horah, had sent on to his servants an announcement of his return that evening, so they might depend on finding a "spread" that would not disgrace the table of the best restaurants of Paris, London or New York. And Murdok Horah involuntarily smacked his lips in anticipation.

As they drew near their journey's end the sky clouded over, and it began to snow in that fine, thick, sifting shower that predicted a heavy fall.

Marman looked uneasy, but Horah reassured him by saying:

"Oh, never mind the snow! A comfortable close carriage will meet us at the station with that fine coachman I mentioned, and the fine supper I told you of will await us at Horah Hall."

But there was another anticipation—richer than all the rest—in Murdok's imagination. It was that he should find Zenobia there in charge of Celia, to be given into his legal guardianship, with no one to interfere. But this he did not mention to the trader.

Night was coming on. The storm was growing heavier, but they were very near their terminus now.

It was 7 P. M. when the train ran into Halfdown Station, where it only stopped long enough to throw out and take on the mail and discharge and receive passengers.

Horah and Marman were the only ones that got off, and there were none to get on. The train steamed off, and left them standing on the platform.

The night was bitterly cold, and it was intensely dark but for the snow, which was falling very fast. The

two men stood in a whirling white mist, with a dimly seen white world around them.

"Why the devil doesn't the carriage come?" angrily demanded Horah of the world in general, as he stood stamping his feet and clapping his hands to keep them warm.

As no answer came in any shape, as nothing broke the stillness of the night, he turned into the little ticket office where the ticket agent was sitting, hugging the little, rusty iron stove.

"Here, you, sir! Has my carriage come from Horah Hall?" demanded the heir.

"No carriage of any sort has been here to-day, sir. It has been a very quiet day," returned the agent.

"D—— it!" exclaimed Horah, as he threw himself down upon the bench that ran along one wall of the room.

"Marman, come in here and wait for the carriage. I'm d—— if I don't give the lazy rascals a couple of dozen apiece on their bare hides for this before I turn them over to you!" he exclaimed, with savage exultation; for, strange as it may seem, he took a demoniac delight in cruelty, and found some consolation for his present inconvenience in the excuse he should have for lashing Si and Brush.

The trader did not reply. He did not delight in cruelty for cruelty's sake; he was only a money grubber, and he was resolved that Horah should not mark any of his merchandise. But it would be time enough to object when the crisis should come.

Horah took out his pocket case, offered Marman a cigar, and selected one for himself. The two men smoked on for a few minutes, that seemed hours to the impatient sybarite. He started up and went out and shouted:

"Hal-lo-o-o, Si! Brush! Are you there?" thinking that "the stupid asses," as he mentally called them, had

perhaps come up after his train had passed, but, not knowing that fact, had drawn up the carriage in some sheltered place to wait for its arrival. So again and again he shouted aloud:

"Hal-lo-o-o, Si! Brush!"

But his voice was lost in the soft, white storm, and not even an echo answered.

Then he paced the platform, cursing, swearing and threatening dire vengeance on the defaulting negroes. He would like to have broken them on a wheel, or to have burned them at the stake, had such punishment been lawful; and, at the very least, he resolved to have them lashed within an inch of their lives. When tired of raving up and down the platform, chilled to the bone, he returned to the office, sat down beside the trader and smoked a second cigar.

Fortunately for him and all with him, his pocket flask of brandy had been exhausted before the train reached the station. But now he inquired of the agent if there was nothing to drink in the office.

The young man answered that there was spring water, and got cursed for his civility.

Several hours passed in blaspheming, swearing and threatening, when at length, at about half-past nine o'clock, when Horah lighted his fifth cigar and sallied out for another storm of profanity on the platform, the muffled sound of wheels was heard approaching softly through the snow.

"There they come—the infernal villains! Oh, they shall howl for this to-morrow!" savagely exclaimed the tyrant, as he rushed out from the platfrom, just as the vehicle, whatever it was, drew up.

"Ah! you d—— scoundrels! I will have you flayed alive for this!" roared Murdok Horah, who followed up his ghastly threat by a volley of the fiercest profanity and obscenity as he strode up to his supposed carriage.

"God bless my soul, friend! Who are you, and what

is the matter with you? Are you often taken in this alarming way?" inquired a good-humored voice from the cart—for an open cart it proved to be, with a white man and a negro on the seat.

"I should rather ask who you are, sir?" said Murdok Horah, unabashed.

"I? Oh, my name is Babbage. I have come to meet the ten-o'clock train for Winchester, if you have no objection, Mr. Horah—for I know you now, sir, though I reckon you took us for some of your niggers, in the dark," said the newcomer, whom the young man now recognized as a farmer living near Horah Hall, though he had not the grace to apologize for the savage assault he had made on him by mistake.

"I have been waiting here since seven o'clock for my carriage and servants, to whom I sent an order to meet me at that hour," he sulkily explained.

"They could not have got your message, sir, or they would have been on time, of course," kindly suggested the farmer, as he alighted. "But, I say, sir, my cart is going home empty, and is quite at your service if you will accept it. My man Sam can drive you within a mile of Horah Hall on his way home. I am sorry he can't drive you all the way; but the fact is the bridge that used to cross the chasm between your place and mine was carried away in the great storm, and has not been replaced yet, so there is no passage over it for wheeled vehicles. There are a couple of logs thrown over it, in fact."

Murdok Horah paused before he accepted this kind offer; but, as there seemed no probability of any carriage coming for him from Horah Hall, he at length concluded to avail himself of this providential relief, and thanked the neighborly farmer, though somewhat stiffly. He hated to be indebted to any man for anything.

As the train was now heard approaching from the

distance, Mr. Babbage took leave of his new friends, and then said to his servant:

"Take these gentlemen to the chasm crossing, Sam, and then drive the horse home and give him a good rubbing down and a hot mash."

Sam, who understood his duties so well as to seldom require an order, felt hurt at receiving one before strangers, said:

"Hi! Marse Bab'ge, did I ebber dis'bey yer in all my boaned days? I rudder die fust!"

"Indeed you never did, Sam; and I believe you would give up your life first. And I, my good boy, would go a long way toward death in your defense. Good-night, Sam! Good-night, gentlemen!" said Babbage, rushing off to the train.

The servant, Sam, came up, touching his hat, and said:

"I'se ready ter start w'enebber yer is, ge'men."

"Come, Marman!" exclaimed Horah.

"And our luggage?" said the trader.

"Leave it here until to-morrow. I will send for it then."

They entered the cart; and when the horse was started up Marman observed:

"If there were many masters like that Babbage I should soon be driven out of business."

"It's such d—— mawkishness that makes niggers impudent," remarked Horah.

"'Deed I'se not imp'dent, ge'men!" exclaimed the sensitive Sam.

"Shut up!" roared Horah.

The astonished Sam subsided as if struck by a shot.

They had enough to do to hold up their umbrellas against the whirling snow and driving wind.

"What an infernal jaunt! May I be cursed if they shan't sweat for this!" exclaimed Murdok Horah, in the wickedest temper that ever possessed a man.

And, indeed, it was a drive, that would have tried the souls of the most patient and enduring.

"It is a wonder your master should have started out on a journey through such a storm as this," said Murdok Horah, in a spirit of fault-finding, notwithstanding that he himself had benefited by the farmer's imprudence.

" 'Twan't snowin' so fas' w'en we started, an' de win' hadn't riz, nudder. 'Sides w'ich, Marse Ned doane min' no wedder," exclaimed Sam. "But I doane fink as eben he'd 'a' stan' dis yere dribe bac' berry well," he added, after a little thought.

They were two hours in getting over the ground that lay between Halfdown Station and the Cleft Chasm. In spite of all precautions, the penetrating snow had sifted between their turned-up coat collars and their necks, and between their pulled-down caps and their heads. Their hands and feet were numbed with cold. They were chilled through. In addition to present suffering, future and serious results seemed probable.

When at length they reached the Cleft Chasm it was still snowing, and blowing as if the elements of the air meant to smother the earth.

"I'se so so'y I can't take yer no furder dan dis, ge'-men!" said Sam, drawing up his cart. "Reckon it's a'most midnight, too, ge'men. P'haps yer'd better go on home 'long ob me?" he suggested.

The trader looked as if he would have liked to accept the invitation, but Murdok Horah instantly threw a damper on his wishes.

"No!" he cried. "We will make our way to the Hall, and find out what those black devils are about! If I find them all in bed I'll rout them out and send them to——" And here followed a volley of blasphemy that shocked even the trader and frightened the negro.

"There's a shallow place about two miles further ter

dribe yer far as dis, an' take de ole hoss home, w'ich he's mos' gib out a'ready, sah," Sam pleaded.

"And I tell you to drive down to the lower crossing; you impudent black dog!" exclaimed Horah, losing his temper, as he always did at the slightest opposition.

"Begs yer pardin', sah, I couldn', indeed," persisted the negro.

"You infernal scoundrel! Do you dare to disobey me?" roared Murdok, starting up.

"The man is mad," muttered the trader. Then quickly laying his hand on Horah, he said:

"Gently, gently, sir! Compose yourself, and let me deal with this darky." And, turning to the negro, he whispered:

"Here, Sam, here is a dollar for you. Take it, and drive up to the lower crossing, my good fellow."

" 'Taine dat, sah—taine dat, indeed! I'd be pe'oud ter "bleege yer, sah—I really would—'dout any pay. But I can't dis'bey my marse, sah, let 'lone de po' ole hoss, mos' gib out."

"Why do you argue with the dog, Marman?" exclaimed Horah, who had with difficulty restrained himself.

"Drive on, you infernal black rascal, or I'll choke you to death and fling you out of the cart!" he yelled, turning to the negro.

"I couldn' dis'bey my own good marse—no, not ef yer was ter kill me fer it!" cried the negro, almost ready to weep.

Horah seized the reins, and, with an oath, jerked them from the driver's hands.

Uttering a howl of despair, Sam caught at the reins, and struggled to recapture them.

Then, with a fiendish roar, Horah sprang upon the negro and took him by the throat.

With a cry of dismay, Marman started to the rescue.

No horse, however old, tired and steady, could stand

such a rumpus in the cart behind him. This one reared, plunged and upset the cart. And in less time than it takes to tell the tale the two passengers were rolling down to the bottom of the chasm.

The negro fared better. At the first shock, which had torn him violently out of Horah's clutches, he had been thrown on the bank near the plunging horse, which almost instantly recovered his composure after he had "conquered a peace."

Sam slowly gathered himself together, raised himself up, made sure that none of his bones were broken, and then began to right his cart.

"Well, this is de Lor' A'mi'ty Hisse'f ter de rescue! Wid de help ob de Lor' A'mi'ty, I'll try ter be a better nigger all de days ob de rest ob my pilg'midge fer dis g'eat 'liberance! Ef dis hadn' happen dat ge'man 'u'd a' killed me sure!" With these words, having righted his cart and soothed his horse, he climbed slowly into his seat and drove toward his home.

Meanwhile Horah and Marman had tumbled, rolling over and over each other, down to the bottom of the chasm, where they lay, shocked, bruised and bewildered, and clutched together. Or, rather, it was Horah who clutched Marman, under the impression, in the darkness and confusion, that he still had hold of the unhappy negro, whom he imagined he was pummeling to his heart's content, as he rained blows upon the unlucky trader, with such adjurgations as:

"Take that! and that! and that! You infernal black rascal! It was your fault! You did it on purpose! I'll have you hanged for this!"

"Hold hard! Hold hard, man! I am not the nigger! What are you about?" roared the trader, as soon as he could struggle free and recover his breath and speech.

"Oh, I thought you were!" was all the excuse Horah condescended to make, as he ceased pounding Marman.

"I certainly 'foregathered with the de'il' when I met

this man!" said the trader to himself. "And if I ever get away from him I will give him a wide berth in the future."

"Where is that black wretch?" inquired Horah.

"Killed, I fear. I see nothing and hear nothing of him."

"I hope he is, d—— him!"

"If you are able to move, I think we had better climb up out of this snow that half buries us," the trader suggested.

Neither of them was hurt beyond a few bad bruises that they did not feel so painfully now as they probably would a few hours hence.

They struggled up, almost frozen, half dead with hunger and fatigue, and began to climb the side of the bank down which they had rolled, planting their feet against projecting points of rocks and holding on to the stunted saplings of pine and cedar that grew in the spot where they had been upset.

They sank down to recover breath. The snow was still falling, the wind still blowing, so that they could have seen no vestige of cart, horse or negro, even if they had been near.

Both men shouted:

"Sam! Sam!"

But no response came.

"We must get up and go on," said the trader, "or we shall perish here in the snow."

Horah rose with difficulty, and began to grope about in the obscurity until he found the end of the rude foot bridge over the ravine.

"Here it is. Be careful now, or we shall pitch headlong to the bottom again, with worse luck than before! It is all the fault of those d——, infernal, black scoundrels who failed to meet us at the station! If I don't have every one of them flayed alive I wish I may be eternally tortured!"

And so, breathing maledictions, he began crossing the logs over the chasm, followed by the trader, who almost trembled for his life as the frail bridge swayed under his feet.

The worst part of their journey was now before them. It was a weary tramp through the terrible night storm, buffeted by the blinding snow and wind—sometimes half buried in the drifts, in danger of losing their way in the darkness, because a part of their road lay through a dense forest where tall trees and thick undergrowth hedged it on either side.

They felt half frozen and half famished by the time they reached the great gate leading into the grounds of Horah Hall.

"Here's the old scoundrel's house. Now I'll knock him up and see what he has to say for himself!" growled Horah, as he plowed through the snow with his stout limbs and went up to the lodge which had been old Si's dwelling place during the lifetime of his mistress.

The little lodge was as dark as pitch, and the snow was drifted up against its front door and window.

"Been in bed for hours! The beastly sloth, to give time for the snow to accumulate like this!" cried Horah, as he reached the little door and began to knock and call:

"Wake up, here, you lazy hound! Wake up, I say, or it will be the worse for you!"

But no response came from within.

Then he grew furious and commenced an assault on the door with both fists and heels, calling, threatening, shouting and blaspheming.

Still no response came from the inside.

Then, with a final violent kick, he sent the door flying from its hinges and rushed into the building, howling:

"I'll drag the dog out of his bed and strangle him for this! You villain, show up here!"

All was as dark and silent within as it was without.

"Marman, have you a match?"

The trader drew a match from his pocket, struck it and handed it to Horah.

He looked around the poor room, with its little bed, table, chair and cold chimney place, and found no sign of recent habitation there.

Then followed an unreportable volley of profanity.

"He may be up at the house helping the cook to prepare that famous supper we have been looking forward to," suggested the trader, rather maliciously.

"D—— the supper!" savagely exclaimed Horah. "Come out and let us go on! The house servants are there, and my ward, Miss de Leon," he added, as he left the lodge and led the way toward the mansion, still with the beating wind against them and the whirling snow around them.

But their eyes had become adjusted to the darkness, and what to others might have seemed impenetrable obscurity soon showed itself to be a massive mansion among the bare trees—black, cold, closed and silent.

When they reached the steps leading up to the front portion they found the snow drifted high up against the door.

"This looks like a cold welcome for your home-coming, sir," spoke the trader.

Muttering an oath, Murdok went up the steps as well as he could and sounded an alarm on the iron knocker. Then he clapped his hands and stamped his feet to keep up some circulation while waiting for a response.

None came.

Again and again he knocked and rang, and cursed, and swore. All to no purpose.

He was by this time in a hurricane of passion.

"Come round to the rear, Marman! Of course all the wretches have gone to bed! And their sleeping quarters are over the kitchen. Oh, won't I make them wish that they had never been born!" he growled, gnashing his teeth, as he led the way to the back buildings.

But everything was shut up, dark and silent, there also. No amount of knocking, shouting, swearing or threatening woke even an echo. And the whole place looked like a long-vacant and abandoned dwelling.

Murdok Horah threw himself into such an ungovernable fury that Marman was really alarmed lest his paroxysm should end in convulsions.

"Clearly there is no one in the house, sir. But is there no negro cabin near, at which you could make inquiries?" suggested the trader.

"Yes," said Horah, as a sudden recollection flashed through his mind; "of course, there's Celia, the mulatto I told you of. She, at least, is faithful! As for the others, I suppose they are all off to some negro dance or other. I'll make them dance to another tune tomorrow! Come Marman! We will go around to Celia's cottage," he concluded, leading the way through the snow and wind to the poultry yard, closely followed by the trader, who felt very much in need of rest and refreshment, and very painfully in doubt as to whether he should get either that night.

CHAPTER XI.

MURDOK HORAH ASTONISHED.

Oft expectation fails.—SHAKESPEARE.

Celia's cottage at the back of the poultry yard, and on a line with the houses, was, like the mansion and every other building on the place, barricaded with snow.

Indeed, it was the snowdrift that guided the men through the darkness to the spot. There, kicking with all his might, and with the added strength of insane fury, Murdok Horah cleared a track to the door and rapped a tremendous alarm with his fists.

"Who is that?" cried a startled voice from the inside.

"It is I—your master! Open the door instantly!" roughly commanded Horah.

"Good gracious, Master Horah! Here in this storm, sir!" exclaimed the horrified voice of Celia, as she tore open the little door and stood there revealed, wrapped in the patchwork quilt she had hastily dragged from the bed and thrown around her before she ran to answer the summons.

"Come in out of the storm directly! Here is a fire, and I will throw on some more wood and make it hotter immediately," she added, turning to the open chimney place, gathering up an armful of pine cones and kindlings and throwing them on the smoldering coals on the hearth.

"Come in, Marman," growled Horah, as he strode into the room and straight across to the fireplace at the back. The trader joined him there.

While they stood thawing themselves out before the genial blaze Celia slipped up the ladder in a corner of the room, dragging her gown after her, went through

a trapdoor to the loft above and quickly put on her clothes, spending so little time there that she came down buttoning up her waist as she reëntered the lower room.

"Master Murdok," she said, approaching him. "I will have some hot coffee for you immediately, sir. You must need it. And I will get ready the best I have in the house. But, sir, hadn't you and the gentleman better take off your wet overcoats, and let me hang them up to dry?"

"No; I am going back to the house directly. Where are those infernal scoundrels of niggers gone to, that they did not meet me at the station, and left no one at the house to open the door for me when I came home? What barn breakdown are they carousing at to-night? Ah, I shall make them dance to a livelier tune once I get hold of them! Why don't you speak, woman? Where have they gone, and when are they coming back?"

"Oh, Master Murdok! How shall I tell you, sir?" exclaimed Celia, wringing her hands in distress.

"Tell me what? What do you mean? Speak, fool!" angrily commanded Horah, throwing himself into a chair.

"Oh, Master Murdok, sir, they are gone!"

"Gone! Who is gone? Where?" he impatiently demanded.

"The colored people, sir! They have all gone for good—run away!"

Murdok Horah sprang to his feet, shaking, convulsed, speechless with fury. He glared at the mulatto, who could only continue in a faint and faltering voice:

"Yes, sir; it was yesterday morning they all heard that you were coming home. Word was sent to them to prepare for you, as you might arrive at any hour. Mr. Godfrey brought the news from The Notches, and

took away his own things at the same time. I did not suspect what they intended to do, sir! But no sooner was Mr. Godfrey well out of the way than they all packed up as many things as they could carry and went off together."

"The infernal scoundrels! To have the daring impudence to run away from me! Me! their lawful owner! Oh! oh! they shall rue it through every vein of their bodies!" exclaimed Horah, now livid with rage, as he dropped back into his chair.

"They can't have got far off, you know, at this season of the year, or from this neighborhood, Marman!" he continued, turning to the trader. "I shall have the woods scoured by bloodhounds! Before another day's sun sets I shall catch the rascals! And then! And then! Yes, I will have every scoundrel of them tied by their heels to a cart's tail and dragged back over the rocks and brambles until they shall not have a rag of clothes on their black hides, nor a shred of skin on their flesh! I will show what it is to rebel against my authority!" he growled, with the low, guttural, thunderous tone of some crouching and ferocious wild beast, to which his lowering brows, his fierce, red eyes and his grimly clinched hirsute muzzle still more likened him, as he sat and gloated in imagination over the cruelties he should so delight to inflict.

"I have not the slightest doubt that you will recapture your runaway slaves, as you say, in a few hours; but remember, Mr. Horah, sir, I have come down here to purchase them, and it would be bad policy on your part to injure their market value while punishing them," suggested the trader, in a deprecating tone.

"I will not be balked of my right to punish my slaves by any consideration of money value! I will punish them within an inch of their lives! I will see them w-r-i-t-h-e! I will enjoy hearing them h-o-w-l!" he snarled, with savage gusto. "And if they should be

permanently disfigured, or mutilated, I will sell them for half their value, or for any price I can get, rather than be balked of my vengeance on my own property!" fiercely retorted Horah.

Meanwhile Celia had drawn a little, pine table up near the fire and spread a white cloth over it, placed white plates, cups and saucers on it and was now busy grinding coffee.

"Where is Miss de Leon?" demanded Horah, suddenly remembering his interest in the girl, whom the news of the flight of his slaves had momentarily driven out of mind. "I thought I sent an order to you to move into the house and protect her until my return. How is it that I find you alone? Is that the way you take care of her?" he demanded, angrily.

"Miss Zenobia is not in the house, sir. Immediately after my mistress' funeral Col. Pryor took her away with him to The Notches," Celia replied.

But before she had finished her sentence Horah had sprung to his feet, his face purple with passion.

"Pryor carried my ward off to The Notches!" he fiercely exclaimed.

"Yes, sir. Oh, Master Murdok! let me——"

"Ah! that is another account I have to settle with him! Oh, how I would like to have my will of him, as I shall have of my slaves to-morrow! Ha! ha! They should have share and share alike!" he laughed, hideously, as he began to walk up and down the narrow limits of the room, reminding the trader of a Bengal tiger he had once seen at a wild-beast show, pacing to and fro within the bars of his cage. And Marman, negro trader as he was, felt shocked, revolted and humiliated by association with such a brute.

Only Celia had any charity for him. She had gone one steadily with the preparation for the meal, which now might pass for an early breakfast, for the late,

gray, winter morning was beginning to break over the eastern mountain range.

"Master Murdok, sit here! Draw up your chair and drink this coffee I am pouring out for you. Here are some fresh eggs, too—poached as you used to like them—and some fresh bread, made last evening. Sit down, sir," she added, placing a chair for the trader, of which he quickly availed himself.

"There, Master Murdok, sir, try to make a good meal, which I am sure you need; and then I will answer all your questions and tell you all I know."

Appetite prevailed over ferocity, and the flesh over the devil; so that Horah refrained from profanity until he had consumed a quart of coffee, several eggs and four slices of bread. And by that time, also, he and his more moderate companion had eaten all they desired.

"Now, Master Murdok," said Celia, when she had cleared the table, "if you and the gentleman will sit here and make yourselves comfortable I will go into the mansion and make the fires, and open the windows, and have things comfortable for you. I will not be long, sir. The wood and kindlings are all laid ready to light."

"Where are the keys of the house? You seem to have been locked out, as well as myself!" growled Horah.

"Yes, sir. But when I came out to feed the chickens yesterday morning I found the great bunch of keys lying on the doorstep. Some of the last of the colored people had left them there."

"Any brandy left in the house? Or has that swine Godfrey swilled it all?" demanded Horah.

"Mr. Godfrey never drank anything strong, sir, and the brandy is there, just as you left it. Some in the cupboard of your bedroom and some on the sideboard of the dining room."

"Then go and bring me a bottle directly, and look sharp about it!"

Celia lighted a lantern and went to the door. But, seeing that the storm of snow and wind was raging with unabated violence, she turned back, wrapped herself closely in a large plaid shawl, and then set out for the mansion, carefully closing the cottage door behind her.

"Now, that woman is a very valuable servant. I should really like to purchase her. What would be your price for her?" inquired the trader, as soon as she was out of sight and hearing.

"Celia? Well, I never thought about selling Celia. I don't know about that. She was my nurse, you see. A sort of foster mother. She is perfectly devoted to me, as you have had an opportunity of seeing for yourself. I have some idea of taking her to Paris with me as an attendant on my ward, Miss de Leon. No, I don't know about selling Celia at any price," declared Horah.

"Well, if ever you should see fit to change your mind, remember that I have made you a proposal," persisted the trader, who, judging from all that he had observed of the spendthrift heir, secretly thought it was quite "on the cards" that he might find it convenient to sell even the woman who had nursed him.

"I'll remember," replied Horah.

"By the way, how old did you say she was?" inquired Marman, with some interest.

"Oh, I don't know," carelessly answered Horah; "somewhere between thirty-five and forty, I suppose. These women marry very early, you know. She was nursing her first child when she began nursing me. It died. Her husband had died a short time before. She might have been of any age between sixteen and twenty at that time."

"She scarcely looks thirty-six now," thought the

trader, but he did not say so; on the contrary, he remarked:

"Well, she is a middle-aged woman, at all events, and they do not fetch a high price in the market. But, come! if you should conclude to change your mind about her, I will give you five hundred dollars for the wench."

"Are you a natural-born fool, or do you take me for one?" rudely demanded Horah.

"Take you for one?" thought the trader, but he said nothing.

"I repeat," continued Horah, "Celia is not for sale. If she were, I should ask a thousand dollars for her, and not take a cent less."

"Whe-e-e-w!" whistled the trader.

And then he went and opened the door and looked out upon the weather. The wind and snow driving in compelled him to quickly close it again.

"I say, Mr. Horah," he exclaimed, as he returned to his seat before the fire, "I don't think you will be able to hunt your runaway niggers with bloodhounds to-morrow."

"Why not?" curtly demanded Horah.

"Because the snow will prevent the scent from lying."

"Curse the luck!" exclaimed Horah, who had not thought of that difficulty.

Celit kept her promise. She was not long absent. She entered at this moment, driven before a blast of wind and snow, bearing in her hand a quart bottle of brandy, which she held out toward her master, who seized it, while with some effort she closed the door against the storm.

"Come, Marman, fortify yourself!" exclaimed Horah, as he produced two large tumblers from Celia's corner cupboard and placed them with the bottle of brandy on the table between himself and his guest.

Marman pourned but little brandy in his glass, and filled it up with hot water from the kettle on the hearth, and began to sip the beverage very slowly, murmuring that it sent warmth and life through his chilled veins. Horah poured out half a tumblerful of the raw liquor and tossed it down his throat almost at a gulp, and then replenished his glass.

"Good Lord! he is a salamander!" thought the trader, as he gazed upon his host from behind the steam of his own temperate glass.

"All is snug and comfortable in the house for you, Master Murdok, and for the gentleman also," said Celia, respectfully.

"Are we in your way?" rudely demanded Horah, who had stretched his legs before the blazing fire and did not feel like moving.

"Oh, not at all, Master Murdok! I only thought that you would be much more comfortable in the mansion, sir," deprecatingly replied the woman.

"Well, you just let me mind my own business, and do you mind yours," he said, pouring out his third drink and tossing it off.

Marman finished his hot glass, and declined to replenish it. He was seated on a most uncomfortable low-backed chair, and he felt both tired and sleepy; and, as his selfish host did not seem inclined to retire, the trader pushed his chair up against the wall, folded his hands on his knees, closed his eyes and tried to rest, if not to sleep.

Horah poured out his fourth glass and drained it down. That finished the bottle.

A cock crowed in the poultry house adjoining the cottage. Then another, and another, shrilly proclaimed that day had dawned. And a flutter among the feathered prisoners told of hunger and restlessness. Then, indeed, Celia went about her business, as she had been tauntingly recommended to do by her ill-natured mas-

ter. She mixed a large tin pan full of cornmeal dough, and went out to release and feed her winged charges.

The wind had now gone down, and the snow had ceased to fall. She was absent a short time only; but as soon as she returned Horah picked up the bottle to fill his glass again, and, finding it quite empty, swore at the woman, and asked her how she dared to go out without his permission, and leave him with no one to wait on him. And then he ordered her to go into the house and fetch him another bottle of brandy.

"Oh, Master Murdok! Pray, pray, sir, don't drink any more this morning!" she entreated, clasping her hands in distress, for she saw that he was even then drunk.

He started up, seizing the poker with a terrible oath, crying out:

"Will you obey me?"

"Yes! yes!" she gasped, flying toward the door. "Oh, God help you! And God help me, too!" she wailed, as she left the cottage.

"My good sir! My good sir! What's the matter? What's the matter? There, there! Sit down and compose yourself!" said the trader, who had been waked up by the noise, and now came forward with the best intentions to soothe the man, whom he saw at a glance was mad with drink.

Horah did not mean to take advice and sit down, but he could not help himself; though his brain was on fire, his limbs were unsteady, and a very slight impulse from Marman caused him to drop upon his chair, from which he would have instantly fallen to the floor had not the trader controlled and settled him so that he leaned forward and supported himself against the table. And then Marman stood by him. This kindness Horah resented.

"You—you're drunk, Marman! You—hic!—better

go to bed!" he said, glaring at the trader with bloodshot, blazing eyes.

"Presently, presently," said the latter, soothingly.

"You go now, before you ex—hic!—pose yourself," he solemnly recommended.

At this moment Celia returned and set the bottle of brandy on the table before her master.

"For God's sake, woman, don't do that!" exclaimed Marman, seizing the bottle.

But Horah was too quick for him, and snatched it out of his hands, crying:

"You have had—hic!—enough! Shan't—hic!—have any more to-day!"

He poured out a glass for himself, spilling the liquor over the table through the unsteadiness of his hand.

"We must get it away from him," whispered Marman, in alarm. "We must, indeed, or he will have the delirium tremens!"

"Oh, no, sir!" murmured Celia, in reply. "Before he half finishes the bottle he will be in a dead stupor. That's the way with him. But if we were to try to deprive him of it now, overpowered as he seems, he would show the rage and strength of a lion. It's heartbreaking, sir, heartbreaking; but there is nothing to be done but to give him his way. It is the only fault he has, sir, if you choose to consider it a fault," said the loyal creature.

"What—hic!—are you two whispering about? Are you making love?" began Horah; but he did not finish his sentence. He reached forth, took the bottle with a shaking hand, poured out some brandy, spilled more, drank it, spattered his clothes, and then dropped his head upon his crossed arms on the table and became quiet. And before another word could be spoken Marman suddenly sprang forward and caught Horah just in time to prevent him slipping from the chair and falling heavily upon the floor. Celia also flew to his

side. But all they could do was to ease his descent. He was such a heavy brute that the united strength of the man and woman, though they were both fairly able-bodied, would not have been sufficient to carry him to the bed which was near at hand. They stretched him on the floor. Celia got a pillow and placed it under his head. Then she knelt by his side and untied his cravat, and loosened all his clothes as well as she could, and finally fetched a quilt and spread it over him and set a chair, covered with her shawl, between him and the chimney place to prevent the glare of the fire from falling on his inflamed face.

"I think that is all that can be done, sir. He will be all right when he wakes. And now, sir, if you yourself would like to lie down and take some rest, after such a fatiguing night, I will show you to the room that has been prepared for you in the mansion," said Celia.

"Thank you, my good girl; I should be glad to get some rest," he said, and got up to follow her.

The night had passed, the storm subsided, the sun, newly risen, was shining brightly over the snow-clad and pine-fringed range of mountains, and down into the snow-carpeted and tree-crowded dell in which the old, gray house and its outbuildings stood.

This was the first sight that the trader got of Horah Hall.

"A very venerable mansion!" he said, in admiration, as he gazed about him.

"Yes, sir; I have heard it was the first great one built in this part of the country," responded Celia, with pride.

When they reached the house Celia opened the front door, admitting the visitor into the spacious and lofty hall, which at once called forth his praise.

"They seldom give so much space to the hall in modern houses," he said, gazing around.

"To-morrow, sir, no doubt, Mr. Horah will take pleas-

ure in showing you over the old house. To-day you both seem to require rest," said Celia, as a gentle hint that the guest should not hang about the hall, staring at the carvings.

She conducted him upstairs into one of the best bedrooms, where there was a bright fire burning, and every convenience of the toilet neatly arranged. And so she left him to repose.

"A very superior woman, that! Three-quarters white, I really believe!" he muttered to himself as he threw off his coat and lay down.

Celia, on leaving the guest, went down into the back parlor and to a buffet beside the chimney, and took from it a box of seidlitz powders and carried them with her to her cottage. She found Horah still in a heavy sleep, and she wetted a towel with cold water and put it on his burning head. Then she prepared her own simple breakfast, and after she had eaten it and cleared away the table and restored the room to order, she sat down to knit and watch the sleeper.

"Blood will out!" she murmured to herself. "Blood will out! Oh, as he sleeps, how much he looks like his grandfather!"

She sat there hours before the sleeper stirred. It was near noon of that short winter day before he began to grunt and throw his arms about. Still he did not awake, though she knew that he would soon do so. She arose and very quietly filled the kettle, placed it over the fire and prepared some strong coffee as a restorative for the drunkard.

At length he opened his eyes, glared around him, raised himself on his elbow, and growled:

"What's all this?"

Celia mixed the seidlitz powder and brought it to him.

"Drink this, Master Murdok," she said.

He grabbed it and swallowed it greedily, for he was consumed with thirst.

"Another!" he said, hoarsely.

And she mixed and brought another. When he had drunk this his faculties grew clearer.

"Where is that beat Marman?" he inquired.

"You advised him to go to bed, and he went, Master Murdok," said Celia.

"Oh, I remember," said Horah. But it is doubtful whether he did.

Celia brought him a basin of water and a towel, and he, still sitting on the floor, washed his burning face and head.

"How came I here?" he crossly inquired.

"You were overtired, and lay down there, Master Murdok," said the woman, cautiously.

"Then why didn't my rascals put me to bed?"

Celia hesitated to reply, fearing to anger him.

"Oh, I remember!" he suddenly exclaimed; "they have run away! Come, then! I shall hunt and drag them home over the rocks and briers with their heels tied to the cart's tail! Did every one of the scoundrels bolt—young and old?"

"All except those who were left free by the mistress' will."

"Who were left free by the will?" angrily demanded Horah, struggling to his feet. But his head reeled and he caught the edge of the table to support himself.

"Let me help you reach the bed, Master Murdok," said Celia, as she handed him a stout stick to support himself on one side while she sustained him on the other. Thus he managed to totter to the bed, and fall upon it. She drew off his coat and arranged him as comfortably as his condition would admit. Then she brought him a cup of strong coffee, and while he drank it, leaning on his elbow, she told him all about the

late Mrs. Horah's will, so far as it concerned the freed negroes.

Horah was furious, but too weak from the reaction of the alcohol he had imbibed to make much manifestation of his ill temper.

"Old Si!" he growled. "He was the least valuable, but there was a good ten years' service in him yet. And he might have brought a good couple of hundred dollars. And Delphie? She would have fetched eight hundred or a thousand! And Servia as much more! I have been robbed! I have been robbed by a most unnatural mother! Si! Delphine! Servia!"

"But, Master Murdok, Servia has not been left free. I did not tell you that, sir," said Celia.

"What! Servia not left free? Why, she was her mistress' favorite! And her own purchase, after her widowhood, too! You must be mistaken."

"No, sir. We were all very much surprised and there was a great deal of talk about it at the time, so I cannot be mistaken," persisted Celia.

"Then she has run away with the rest!" he exclaimed, following with his usual vituperation.

"But, Master Murdok, Servia has not run away with the others!"

"Confound you! what do you mean? You contradict yourself at every turn! You told me that all had run away except the freed ones!" angrily exclaimed Horah.

"I should have said all who had been left at the Hall, sir; but I forgot Servia. She was not left at the Hall, sir."

"Where was she left, then?" demanded Horah.

"When Col. Pryor——"

"Don't mention that infernal scoundrel's name to me! That—that atrocious kidnapper! Oh, but I will make him sweat!" furiously exclaimed Horah.

Celia looked appalled, although she was accustomed to his outbreaks. There was a silence between them

for a few moments, broken at last by Horah, who cried out, in a voice of wrath:

"Well, why don't you answer my question and tell me, where the jade Servia is?"

"Servia is at The Notches, waiting on Miss Zenobia," replied Celia.

"Oh, she is, is she? That villain has not only abducted my ward, but has stolen my slave! Oh, he shall suffer for it!"

He lay quiet for a few moments, and then said:

"Give me another cup of coffee! Oh, if I were only able to get up! But this confounded swimming in my head!"

When Celia had complied with his request, and he had drunk the beverage, he gave her back the cup and said:

"Now I know what to do. Go and see if that fellow Marman is up, and tell him that I have some important business to transact with him, and must see him immediately."

Celia went out and soon returned, accompanied by the trader.

"Hope I haven't roused you out of bed too early," sarcastically observed Horah.

"Oh, no," declared the trader, refusing to take offense, and seating himself by the bedside. "I was dressing to come out when called. I hope you feel better this morning, Mr. Horah."

"Not much. That long tramp in the face of the storm has knocked me out."

"I thought it would," said the trader, dryly.

"But now, Marman, I have a proposal to make to you—a very advantageous one, I am sure."

"What is it?" inquired the trader.

Instead of answering the trader immediately, he turned to the woman and said:

"Celia, go into the house and fetch me pen, ink and paper."

When Celia had gone out to do her errand, Horah turned to the trader and said:

"There is one of my slaves that I can lay my hand on. And she is one of the most valuable—a tall, robust, handsome mulatto, about thirty years old, named Servia. I told you about her."

"The one you said would be priceless as a lady's maid or a gentleman's housekeeper?"

"The same. She did not bolt with the others. She is at The Notches, in attendance on my ward, Miss de Leon. She is worth a thousand dollars, any day. Come! I will sell her to you for eight hundred at a bargain. I wish I could go with you to The Notches to-day, but I cannot, and that settles it. I will, however, give you a bill of sale for the woman, and you can take my horse and buggy and drive over there and claim her."

"Buy her without seeing her? No, thank you, sir!" said the trader, smiling.

"What a tiresome idiot you are! You are trifling with the best chance for a good bargain that ever a man had. Come, now! I will indulge you!" cried Horah, whose wish for immediate vengeance on the family that had offended him quite overruled his prudence. "You shall draw up a bill of sale from me to you for the woman Servia, for the sum of eight hundred dollars to be paid to me. Go armed with that to The Notches, and bring the woman back with you; but you need not pay a dollar of it until you have approved the purchase. Is that fair?"

"Quite!" said the trader. But he secretly resolved that whether he approved the woman or not he would pay no more than five hundred dollars for her, in which case a new bill of sale would have to be made

out; but it was time enough to broach that subject after he should have gained possession of the woman.

Celia entered with some yellow paper, a small bottle of ink and a few rusty steel pens in her hands, declaring that these were the best she could find.

"Draw that table up to the bedside and put the stationery on it," said Horah.

And when the woman had obeyed the order, he added:

"Now get Mr. Marman some breakfast as quick as you can, for he is going over to The Notches to do some business for me."

Celia went rapidly to work to fulfill this command.

"Now, Marman, draw your chair up to the table, and fire away. This paper is not legal cap, to be sure, but it will do."

"Yes, it will do," assented the trader; and he immediately went to work and soon completed the writing out of the bill of sale in all its legal form. He then handed it to Horah, who read it with suspicious scrutiny, and pronounced it all right and signed it.

By that time Celia had placed the coffee, corn cakes and bacon and eggs on the table, and now she invited the guest to sit down and partake.

"Celia, you know how to harness a horse. Now, while Mr. Marman is eating his breakfast do you, to save time, go to the stable and put the best horse to the buggy and bring it around to the door for him."

"Ah, no," said the trader. "I can make my way through the snow better on horseback. Have you not a saddle horse?"

"Yes, sir," replied Celia; "there is Master Murdok's riding horse, Prance."

"But how will you bring the woman back with you?" demanded Murdok Horah.

"I will establish my claim to her, and if I approve

of her I shall order her to be in readiness at any time I may call for her."

"All right! Saddle Prance and bring him around to the door, Celia," said Horah. "If you are not a good horseman, Prance will land you in the snow before you get back," he added, to Marman.

"I never yet saw a horse I could not manage," confidently asserted the trader.

Celia hastily threw a shawl over her head and hurried from the cottage.

"An invaluable servant! She can do anything. I would rather have her than the other one," said the trader.

"Well, you are not going to get her. And you don't know what you are talking about when you say that you would rather have her than Servia. Wait until you have seen Servia," said Horah, with his usual rudeness.

In a short time Celia brought the horse, snorting and prancing, to the door.

Marman, having finished his breakfast, mounted the prancing animal with the skill of an experienced horseman, and, armed with the bill of sale, started at a gallop for The Notches, to seize the person of Servia and claim her as his purchased property, while Horah waited his return, gloating over the revenge he was about to enjoy.

CHAPTER XII.

LOVERS MADE HAPPY.

Now in the winter of our discontent,
Made glorious summer—— —SHAKESPEARE.

The morning succeeding the night's storm ushered in one of those rare winter days peculiar to our variable climate.

The sky was clear and blue, the sun bright and dazzling; the air was mild and fresh, although the ground, from mountain summits to valley bottoms, was white with snow.

At The Notches, directly after breakfast, Col. Pryor lighted his pipe and went out upon the piazza, from which the snow had been swept, to promenade and smoke, while he watched for the return of his messenger from the post office, to which he had been sent some hours earlier.

"Any letters, Tim?" he called out, as he saw the man ambling up to the house on his old white cob.

"Yes, Marse Cunnel, sah! One big one—dat's all, sah," replied the man as he halted at the steps, and drew the mail bag from his arm and handed it to his master, who came down to receive it.

"There, go now and attend to your horse and yourself, too, my good fellow," said the colonel, as he reentered the house and went into his study. He shut and locked the door, because he always liked to examine his mail and read his letters secure from interruption; dropped into his armchair, opened the bag, and drew out the solitary letter, which was a thick one in a long, official envelope.

"God bless my soul!" was his sudden exclamation of extreme surprise, as he read the superscription. "Silas'

handwriting, and the Washington postmark! Can he be there? Why, I thought he was a thousand miles away, at least! And I did not hope to hear from him for a couple of months or so!" he added, as he carefully broke the seal.

The long envelope contained three letters, sealed and directed; one to Col. Nathaniel Pryor; one to Miss Jemima Abbace, and one to Gilbert Godfrey, Esq. He laid aside the two last-named letters, and took up his own.

"Now, let us see what he has to say about our two poor young sweethearts. I hope he doesn't mean to go in for the 'cruel parent' or the 'stern father' dodge! And let us see why he is in Washington City instead of being at Fort Devil's Icy Peak, in Oregon," he mused as he opened his letter, and began to read as follows:

"WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C.,
"February 14th.

"MY DEAR NAT: Your letter of the twelfth instant, directed to me through the department, struck me much nearer than you aimed. In fact, it was handed to me here this morning by the clerk of the mails. It was well you did not risk sending it through the general post office, for if you had it would have been five or six weeks in reaching its destination, even supposing that hostile Indians, border ruffians, train wreckers, mail robbers and other ravening beasts had let it pass, and even then it would not have found me at the fort.

"And now to explain my opportune presence in this city. About five weeks ago I was ordered by the general on special duty here, as the bearer of secret and important dispatches to the department. And after a rough journey over the Rockies and through the desert, I reached civilization alive, and arrived only two days ago. Have been working like the deuce ever since.

Haven't had an hour to write to you or my little girl, much less a day at my disposal to run down and see you.

"The fact is this—that there's trouble brewing all through the Indian reserves, and a general uprising is anticipated. I have to hold myself in readiness to start with reënforcements at a moment's notice.

"And now to the subject of your letter, to which I shall devote the hours due to sleep. But first, my dear Nat, let me thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your goodness to my poor, little, motherless girl, who might just as well be fatherless, too, for all the good such a rusty old army gun as I am ever was to her! Let her thank God that she has an uncle, and such an uncle as Nat Pryor! I did hope that she and her Cousin Noll might have made a match of it. I also thought that you would like the arrangement. That was partly the reason why I sent her down to you. I said nothing about it, but left things to take their course. And they have taken it in another direction.

"So my little girl has a suitor whom she loves, and whom you approve! Well, my dear Nat, your indorsement of the young fellow is all that is necessary. I can place the most explicit confidence in your good judgment, as well as on your true affection for our little Jim. You are a father to her in love; be also a father to her in authority, and govern this matter as if she were your own child—yes, that was a tear that fell and blotted the last word! And it won't do! Old army guns must not turn into waterspouts.

"I thank you, my dear Nat, for your offer to give your niece a marriage portion to set the young pair up housekeeping. But how can I let you do that! Nat, you are one of nature's noblemen! You ought to be in the regular army. You would be an honor to the service.

"I shall write to my little girl, and inclose her a check on the Westchester Bank for a thousand dollars, to buy some gowns and bonnets. I shall also write to her suitor, with whose frank, manly, straightforward letter I was very favorably impressed. I shall inclose both letters in the same envelope with this to you, as I think a big packet is less likely to be lost, or miscarried, than a little one.

"I will try to get leave—or I will do anything short of deserting, or resigning—in order to run down and see you and my little girl and her intended, and, last of all, our dear Noll, whom I cannot help regretting as a lost son-in-law. Though I dare say the young dog has found his affinity—is not that the name for a sweetheart now?—long before this.

"Well, God bless you, old fellow!

"Always yours, S. ABBACE."

Nat Pryor sprang to his feet with the joyous alacrity of a schoolboy, who had received a tip, or been promised a holiday.

"He's a good old chap, after all! Dear old Silas! I hope he is happy with his new wife. He says nothing about her, and I guess his reason; he is afraid of hurting my feelings through my affections for my dear departed sister. As if she or I had any of the 'dog in the manger' in our composition! Good old Silas! If you come down here I will show you how little jealousy of that sort there is in my make-up! And now to make Jim happy!"

And, waving the letter in triumph over his head, he ran into the hall, calling:

"Jim! Jim! Zenobia! Girls! Where are you! Come down here immediately. Here are letters!"

A swift rushing of light feet was heard overhead, and the two young women came hurrying downstairs.

"Letters, uncle?" exclaimed both girls in a breath,

for Zenobia had also taken to claiming relationship with the affectionate colonel.

"Yes! And such letters! he exclaimed, waving the documents aloft.

"Good news, uncle?" It was their blended voices again.

"The very best of news! Now, guess who this letter is from!

"Oh, how can we? It is weeks too early to expect one from father, of course. Now, don't tease, Uncle Nat! Do tell us who it is from! Is it from any of Zenobia's relations, who have at last discovered her existence and whereabouts?"

"No, my dear," replied Nat Pryor, growing serious the moment Zenobia's name was mentioned. "It is from your father, in answer to mine, concerning your marriage."

"From my father!" exclaimed the girl, growing pale between surprise and apprehension.

"Yes; but I told you that it contained good news," said the colonel, soothingly.

"I thank the Lord for that!" said Jemima, reverently. "But how, possibly, could his answer have reached you so soon? I thought it would take weeks before your letter could reach him in the far West."

"And so it would have been. But I sent my letter through the war department, to be forwarded, and it chanced to meet him there."

"In Washington!" exclaimed Jemima, in astonishment.

"Yes, my dear, in Washington, where he had been sent on special duty with a message relating to the condition of the Indian frontier."

"How strange! And, oh! how fortunate!" exclaimed Jemima.

"His letters will explain more fully. Here are three

—one to you, one to me and one to Godfrey, which I shall send this afternoon by Tim."

Jemima took her father's letter, and, saying, "You will excuse me, I know, Zenobia, dear," sat down on the bottom step of the hall stairs to read it. The check rolled out first of all. She picked it up and put it into her pocket without stopping to notice its amount, so eager was she to read her father's words.

"My dear father! My dear father!" she murmured, kissing the letter again and again, while tears, not of sadness, filled her eyes. "He does love me, after all! And I always thought he did not! Oh, how undutiful, unjust, ungrateful, un-everything I have been that I ought not to have been! To think so hardly of him as I have done! And what a lovely letter!" she exclaimed, pressing it again and again to her lips, and to her heart.

"Look after your check, Jim! There it goes, fluttering over the floor!" exclaimed the colonel, picking up the fugitive piece of paper that the girl had carelessly drawn out of her pocket with her handkerchief.

"You take charge of that, uncle, dear, and lock it up in your strong box. To buy bonnets and gowns, indeed! As if I would squander my dear father's gift in gowns and bonnets! Not likely! I shall put it to much better use than that. But, oh! uncle, dear, do send Tim off directly with Godfrey's letter! It will make him so happy! And now I must run upstairs to answer my dear father's letter immediately, so as to make sure it will reach him before he leaves Washington, if possible—for he says that he may be ordered off at a moment's warning. Stay! I won't be long writing this letter. And Tim can take it to the post office when he goes. Here! Kiss me, Zenobia, and wish me joy!" she said, holding up her arms to her friend, who had been left rather in the background during this scene.

"That I can do with all my heart and soul, dearest Jemima!" responded the Spanish girl, with a warm embrace.

Then Jemima fled upstairs to write a long, grateful, affectionate letter to her father, fervently thanking him for all his kindness to herself and to her lover, and eulogizing Godfrey in the highest terms—praising him to the echo. Above all, promising what a dutiful son he would be to him. She also added a fervent petition to the major to come down if possible to see her before he should leave for the far West. She concluded with earnest and sincere assurances of her own devoted love. Having sealed and directed the letter, she hastily scratched a little note to Godfrey, asking him to come over and see her, to compare their letters. Then she ran downstairs, to find Tim mounted and ready to do her errand. Col. Pryor also stood in the hall, with two letters in his hand. He, too, had written to his brother-in-law, and to his prospective nephew, by marriage.

All these were confided to Tim, with strict injunctions to post the letters first, and then to go to Dr. Bland's house and deliver the two little notes to Mr. Godfrey.

As soon as Tim had galloped off the colonel closed the front door, and the somewhat excited little family returned to their usual avocations.

The colonel went to his study to balance his accounts, and the girls to the parlor to sit down to their favorite fancywork.

The messenger had been gone over an hour; and, should he make proper haste, it would soon be time for him to return.

The house was very quiet. Col. Pryor was still in his study, bending over his desk, addling his brains over that difficult problem, to a liberal man with limited means, of making the columns of the income bal-

ance those of outlay, without succeeding in doing so; and pursuing fugitive dimes and dollars down all the avenues of his memory, without being able to find out where they had gone.

Jemima and Zenobia were still in the parlor, sitting in opposite rocking-chairs, busily engaged in their lace work, and conversing in low tones on the major's letters, and on his daughter's and her lover's prospect of a speedy marriage. Zenobia was all in favor of their wedding at once, and living at The Notches. But Jemima declared that she meant to leave the time of the marriage to her Uncle Nat's judgment, and their place of residence to be decided by Godfrey's interests.

Oliver was absent at the office of Squire Clement Kent, at Mistyrock, where he was reading law, and would not be home before evening.

Druse was in the kitchen, getting dinner; Otto was helping her by washing and trimming vegetables.

And, finally, Servia, in the absence of Tim, was doing part of his work by dusting the furniture in the front hall.

If Servia had been a handsome girl at the age of seventeen, when she was first presented to the reader, she was a much handsomer woman now, at the age of thirty.

She was tall, perfectly proportioned, and finely developed. Her features were pleasant and very expressive. Her eyes and mouth were rather too large, but beautifully shaped. She wore a tight-fitting black alpaca gown that showed her figure to the best advantage. Around her head was loosely coiled a red bandanna handkerchief, from under which her glossy, black and crisply curling hair escaped in tiny ringlets, to slightly shade her forehead and temples.

As she moved about, wielding her duster and brushing high and low, no beholder could have failed to ad-

mire the symmetry of her form and the grace of her movements.

Presently her attention was attracted by the sound of horses' hoofs galloping up to the door, at which they stopped.

Naturally believing that the horseman was no other than Tim, returned from Mistyrock, Servia, without waiting for the summons of the knocker, hurried and opened the door.

But he was not Tim who sat on the horse which was halted before the portico. To Servia he was a perfect stranger.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SLAVE TRADER'S RECEPTION.

The stranger was a stout, florid-faced, iron-gray-whiskered man, who sat his horse firmly. Servia, still as Tim's substitute, went down to receive the visitor.

"Is Col. Pryor at home?" inquired the trader—for he it was—eying the handsome mulatto woman from head to foot, though to his view she was less woman than merchandise from which a large profit might be made in the course of buying and selling.

"Yes, sir, the colonel is at home," politely replied Servia. "Will you alight and walk in?"

The trader lifted his eyebrows in supercilious surprise. "Here was a mulatto woman of the plantations, who spoke as good English as he could," he thought to himself. And he did not like her the better for it, personally, though, he reflected, it would heighten her value in the market. He wondered if she should be his new purchase. And he hoped she might be, as he drew his feet from the stirrups and dropped to the ground.

"Shall I tie the horse here, sir, or shall I lead him to the stables and put him up?" inquired Servia, as she took the bridle.

"Oh, just tie him here. I shall make but a short call," replied the visitor.

Servia secured the horse, and then turned to lead the way up the steps to the front door, saying, politely:

"This way, if you please, sir."

"Stop one moment, my girl. I have a word to say to you," began the trader, standing where he was.

Servia turned and stood looking at the speaker with questioning surprise, yet with the calm self-possession that might have graced any gentlewoman too familiarly

accosted by a total stranger—a manner that the trader characterized as "insolent," and mentally resented.

"What is your name?" he curtly demanded, for he was not going to put up with any "airs."

"Servia, sir," quietly replied the woman.

"Oh! Ah! And you were a slave of the late Mrs. Horah, of the Hall?"

"Y-e-s, sir," faltered Servia, flushing ruddily through her dark skin and feeling somewhat humiliated by the rudeness to which she had never been accustomed.

"Since her death you are the property of her son and heir, Mr. Murdok Horah?" still more brusquely demanded the trader, letting his covetous eyes rove over the fine form of the woman.

All the flush faded from the face of Servia, leaving it as pale as one of her color could become. A vague dread seized her heart and choked her voice. She could not reply.

"I asked you a question, girl! Answer! Yes or no!" sharply commanded the trader.

"Yes, sir," faintly faltered the woman, ready to sink with that vague terror which she could neither understand nor overcome.

"Ah! then that is all quite right! I have bought you from your master, my girl! And you are to be ready to go with me at seven o'clock to-morrow, sharp! Do you hear?" peremptorily demanded the trader.

Servia heard, and lost her head with horror! Forgetting duty, politeness, everything, she turned and fled up the steps, dashed open the front door, slammed it to, and bolted it against the trader, burst into the study, where the colonel sat writing, flung herself down on the floor at his feet, and, clasping his knees, cried frantically:

"Save me! Save me, Master Colonel! Oh, for God's sake, save me!"

"Why, Servia! Servia! My good girl! What on

earth is the matter with you?" exclaimed the dismayed colonel, fearing that the woman had suddenly gone raving mad.

"Oh, sir! Save me! Save me from him! For the love of God, save me from him!" was all that the agonized creature could utter, as she clung around his feet and dropped her curly black head upon them.

"From whom, in the name of Heaven? From Murdok Horah? Has he come back?" inquired the colonel, as a sudden light broke on his mind.

"Oh, yes, sir! And he has sold me! Sold me! And sent a man here to take me away! Oh, for God's sake, save me! There, sir! you hear him knocking at the door now! Oh, for the love of God, save me from him!" cried Servia, wildly wringing her hands.

"Oh, I see! I see!" said the colonel, putting his hands protectingly on the bowed head. "Hush! hush! Quiet yourself! No harm shall come to you! He shall not touch a hair of your head! He shall not look upon your face again!"

"Oh, sir! God bless you! God forever bless you and yours! But, oh, sir! he will ask you an awful high price for me! More than I am worth to you, sir! Oh, can you save me?" pleaded Servia, in doubt and fear.

"I certainly can, and will! But, there! you really must calm yourself," said the colonel, gently putting her away from him, as he rose from his chair.

"Oh, sir! I had scarce a hope that you could when I fell down at your feet! But you can, and will! Oh, glory be to God!"

"Yes, yes! But do you hear that rascal pounding at the front door? Now do you go into the parlor and stay with the young ladies while I go to meet Mr. Scoundrel—slave trader!" Nat Pryor said, grimly, as he left his study followed by Servia.

But he lingered in the hall until he saw the girl safe within the parlor, and then he went to meet the trader,

who had continued to knock incessantly from the moment Servia bolted him out, to that when Col. Pryor opened the door, and stood before him—a quiet, dignified, inquiring presence that rather abashed the intruder.

"Col. Pryor, I presume!" he said, in a tone that was meant to be free and easy, but which only seemed awkward and insolent.

"Yes," answered the gentleman, determined to waste as few words as possible on his "favorite antipathy," the slave trader.

"My name is Marman!"

"Well?"

"I have come—a—from Mr. Murdok Horah."

"Ah!"

This was embarrassing. Marman shuffled his feet, cleared his throat, and, drawing out from his pocket a folded paper, handed it to the colonel, saying, loftily:

"This, sir, will explain my business!"

Col. Pryor took the paper and looked it over.

Meantime Tim had ridden up, unperceived by either the colonel or the trader, and had halted his horse under a tree, respectfully waiting until his master should get through talking with his visitor.

Col. Pryor returned the paper to the trader without a word.

"Well, sir!" rudely exclaimed the latter, losing his temper, "you see what you have got to do!"

"Yes, I see," grimly replied the colonel.

"You have got to deliver up to me that yellow wench who slammed the door in my face. But I know how to bring such impudent hussies to their knees!"

"Quite so!" assented the colonel, with a curious smile.

Then, catching sight of his servant, he exclaimed:

"Ah! there's Tim! Just in the nick of time! Tim come here! I have a job for you!"

The black man rode up to his master and halted for orders.

"Well, my good fellow? You mailed the letters and delivered the notes?" inquired the colonel.

"Yes, Marse Cunnel, sah, dat I done. I put de long ones inter de pos' offis, and tuk de little ones ter de doctor's hous', sah! w'ich de youn' ge'man wer' not in, but I lef' dem inter de ca'e ob Miss Dinah! An' oh! ain' she jis a hornet, neder!" he added to himself.

"All right, Tim! Dinah will see that Mr. Godfrey gets his letters!"

"You are keeping me waiting, sir!" aggressively exclaimed the trader.

"Not at all," said the colonel.

"I tell you I want my property, sir!" exclaimed Marman, raising his voice.

"You are on horseback! How do you propose to carry her off? Tim, wait there, I want you!"

"That's my business. I have bought the wench! She is my property! I did intend to give her a little time to get ready, and to come for her in a gig to-morrow, but after this, if I choose to teach the hussy a lesson, and tie her by a rope to my stirrup, and compel her to walk beside my horse all the way back to Horah Hall, to take the nonsense out of her, it is none of your business! Come, sir! You keep me waiting!" cried the trader, growing red with excitement.

"I will not keep you waiting ten minutes longer," said the colonel.

"You had better not!" growled Marman.

"Tim," exclaimed Nat Pryor, "you hear this fellow?"

"Yes, Marse Cunnel! Who he jawin' 'bout?"

"Servia."

"Servy! Servy! Now de Lor' hab messy on dat po' soul!" exclaimed Tim, smacking his lips in anticipation of a treat.

"You are keeping me waiting, sir!" again growled Marman.

"Not at all. You are at perfect liberty to depart. Nay, I strongly recommend you to do so."

"Not without my property, by ——!" cried the trader.

"Tim," said the colonel, "ride down to the kennels and loose the hounds!"

"Yes, sah! yes, sah!" joyously responded Tim, as he turned and galloped away on his errand.

"What is the meaning of this?" savagely demanded Marman.

"It means that you have just five minutes to mount your horse and get out of these premises!" replied the colonel, coolly.

"Not without my nigger! Bring out the wench that slammed the door in my face!"

"If she did that, she was following the rules of the house."

"Rules?"

"Yes! there are two rules my people never break. The first is, that if a trader in human flesh and blood presents himself at this house, the door is to be shut in his face; and the second is, that he shall be hunted off the premises by the hounds. My people are models of obedience to these rules. I gave you five minutes; one minute has gone!"

"You can't scare me! You daren't do it! You country ruffian! I will take the law of you! You shall suffer for this!" roared Marman, with a torrent of maledictions enough to raise the hair of a pirate in a storm.

"You had better mount and get away," coolly counseled Col. Pryor.

Marman swore, stormed and cursed.

"You are losing time," said the colonel, in a warning voice.

Marman cursed, stormed and swore.

"My man has reached the kennels by this time," calmly observed the colonel.

Marman continued his profanity.

"There! The hounds are loose! Don't you hear them baying? Now, God have mercy on your soul if they get at you! Your blood will be on your own head!" concluded the colonel.

With fierce maledictions, the trader flew to his horse, with shaking hands, untied him, sprang upon his back and fled from the spot as if he had been shot from a bow!

Nat Pryor burst into one of his uproarious laughs.

"Poor devil! what a terror he is in!" he exclaimed, as he watched the flight of the trader. "But he will be more terrified than injured, I think," he concluded, as he turned and paced the piazza.

Across the lawn, down the drive, and out of the gate, fled the fugitive for his life!

Just as he passed the gate, the pack of hounds, set on by Tim, burst from the stable yard in full cry and hot pursuit.

On flew the frightened horse as if Satan were at his heels. The rider had to cling to his neck to keep from being thrown from his back.

Marman cursed himself, his business, his errand down the country, and the country itself. He cursed Murdok Horah, Nat Pryor and the "yellow wench" who had brought him into this peril!

He swore to himself that he had been in deadly danger of his life ever since he had set foot in this infernal neighborhood!

He blasphemed against Heaven, and denounced the earth and its inhabitants, as he clung desperately to his horse's neck and fled through the gathering darkness of the night, in instant peril of awful death from more than one impending disaster!—from being vio-

lently jerked off his saddle in that headlong speed!—from fatal collision with the overhanging branches of the trees that stretched across the dark forest road!—from being crushed by the stumbling and falling horse on that frozen and slippery ground!—and, worse than all, from being overttaken, pulled down, and torn to pieces by those fierce four-footed fiends in full cry behind him, baying, as it seemed to him, his death dirge!

Oh! he swore in his wrath and despair, if ever, by great good luck, he should get out of this accursed country, with life and limb, he would never! never! never, so help him! set foot in it again.

So on and on through the thickening shadows and deadly perils, he flew more like a whirlwind than a man on horseback. Sometimes his brain reeled, his reason tottered, his mind wandered! He fancied this rush and whirl through night and death was an incubus, or delirium! The fiends were gaining on him! One especially—the leader of the pack, a terrible beast called Tiger, on account of his great size, strength and ferocity, was now upon him! leaping at his heels! catching at his boots, and tearing the ends of his trousers! He would have been dragged from his seat but for the frenzied speed of the horse!

The catastrophe came suddenly at last. The fierce, panting hound, leaping at the rider's limbs, tore the horse's flanks. The maddened steed sprang into the air, flung back his heels, and sent the hound, with a stunning kick, rolling down the road, and pitched the rider over his head into a snowdrift.

CHAPTER XIV.

TIM'S WARNING.

To return to Gilbert Godfrey.

On the morning of this same day, that had proved so disastrous to the slave trader, Dr. Bland had left his house at an early hour, leaving his young assistant in charge of the office, to answer such calls as might be made for him in his absence.

Godfrey spent the forenoon in study uninterrupted except by one colored woman who wanted a "description" for a sore throat, and the village cobbler, who wanted a tooth "pulled out!" These were free patients, a class of which the good physician's office practice principally consisted. When these had been served, Godfrey returned to his studies, and read diligently until he was summoned to attend a lady living a mile out of the village, who had been taken suddenly ill. He hastened to obey the call, well wrapped up for trudging through the deep snow.

It was during his absence from the office that Tim arrived with the notes from Col. Pryor and Jemima, which he left with the Yellow Jacket.

When Godfrey returned, Dinah handed him the two notes. Seeing that one was addressed in the handwriting of the colonel, and the other in that of Jemima, he thought the first was no more than an invitation to visit The Notches, and the other a persuasion to its acceptance.

Of course, he opened his sweetheart's note first. And when he read the good news of her father's consent to their marriage, leaving all details as to when and where, and how the wedding should take place, to the kind heart, willing hands and righteous judgment of their friend, Col. Pryor, why, then—steady-going Gil-

bert Godfrey was simply demoralized with delight! Jemima's note finished with a peremptory requisition of his presence at The Notches that same evening.

It is needless to say that Godfrey felt in a most submissive and obedient mood toward the queen of his heart.

Then he read the colonel's letter, full of cordial congratulations on his happiness, and hearty approval of the major's course in the affair, and a pressing invitation to come to The Notches without delay, to talk matters over.

Was ever a young lover so suddenly surprised by unexpected rapture?

He could study no more that day! He would have flown to Jemima that minute if he could have done so. But honor and duty bound him to the office until Dr. Bland should return.

But he could not sit still. He walked up and down the office floor until its boundaries seemed too narrow for his excitement. Then he opened the front door and paced up and down before the house. The sun was sinking low. It seemed to him that the doctor was much later in returning than he had been on the preceding evening.

He was growing impatient when he saw a horseman, coming down the street. As he drew near, Godfrey recognized Oliver Pryor.

"Hello, Noll!"

"Hello, Gill!"

Such was the greeting.

"Hold up, Noll, I want to speak to you!"

"I was about to do that very thing, Gill!" said Oliver, as he halted and threw himself out of the saddle, tied his horse to the post, and walked to meet his friend.

They shook hands.

"It is only two days since you left us, old boy, but I declare it seems like two years! We miss you awfully,

Godfrey!" said Oliver, as they went into the house together.

"I am going over to The Notches this evening. I am only waiting here for the doctor's return. Come into the office," said Godfrey, leading the way.

Noll threw himself into the doctor's big armchair and stretched out his legs comfortably.

"I have such news to tell you!" exclaimed Godfrey, "but perhaps you have heard it?"

"News? No, I have heard none," replied Noll, interested on the instant.

"Oh, of course! you have been in Kent's office all day!"

"Why, yes. But the news! The news! It seems to me like there has been no news since Columbus discovered America!" said Noll, with a yawn.

"You remember about a week ago I wrote to Maj. Abbace, inclosing a letter of introduction from your father?"

"Oh, yes, you poor devil! and you have about one chance in a hundred of getting any answer at all!—certainly none whatever of getting one under three months," said Noll, partly sympathetic, partly chaffing.

"I have an answer to-day!" said Godfrey, in triumph.

"Eh? What? How is that?" incredulously inquired Noll.

"My letter was sent through the war department, and met Maj. Abbace in Washington, where he had just arrived on duty connected with the Indian bureau."

"Why, it's like a Christmas pantomime! A 'Hey, Presto!' Shift the scene and now we are in England, and now at the North Pole and presently on the moon!"

"Read these letters," said Godfrey, as he frankly placed the notes in his friend's hands.

"Well, old fellow, you are in luck! The 'course of true love' not only runs smooth, but it also sings like a mountain brook in the sweet summer time!" said Noll,

waving the two notes flaglike over his head in a way that reminded Godfrey of the colonel, his father. "Receive my congratulations! We shall have a double wedding at The Notches, for I don't mean to be left behind in the race, I tell you! And young marse shall give away both brides! Hurrah! Shake hands, old man!" he concluded, seizing Godfrey's digits and half crushing them in the zeal and fervency of his sympathy.

So much were they absorbed in the subject that they did not hear the approach of the old doctor until he opened the door and entered the office.

"How do you do, Oliver? I am glad to see you. You are quite a stranger. All well at home? Why, what in the world has happened? You two youngsters look as triumphant as if the one had been appointed chief justice of the United States Supreme Court, and the other surgeon-general!" exclaimed the doctor, suddenly pulling himself up and looking from one happy young face to the other.

"Oh, it is a thousand times more glorious than anything of that sort!" cried Oliver, speaking for both. "Let me explain!" And he told the story of the letters.

"That's right! That's just as it should be! Now, Godfrey, marry the young lady as soon as she pleases, and bring her home to live with me! We have not had a lady in the house since my last daughter married! I have great esteem and affection for Jemima, and shall be delighted to have her here. Of course, her place in her uncle's house will be happily filled by his daughter-in-law-elect. Is it not so, Oliver?"

"Just so!" sententiously replied young Pryor.

"But, oh, Dr. Bland! you overwhelm me with obligations! Who is like you in this world?" exclaimed Godfrey, quite overcome by his emotions, as he grasped the hand of the doctor in both his own and came near dropping tears upon them.

"Oh, come, come, my dear boy! You overrate mat-

ters! This arrangement will be for the welfare and happiness of us all! Think how much sunshine she will bring with her! How bright the house will be! There! Now go and order your horse to accompany Oliver home!" cordially exclaimed the doctor.

"First let me report the cases I have had to-day," said Godfrey.

"Order your horse, and talk while he is being saddled," persisted Dr. Bland.

Godfrey went out and gave the order to Si, who had been specially detailed to wait on him, and then returned and reported his cases and received the approval of his principal.

When the horse was brought around to the door, Godfrey and Oliver took leave of Dr. Bland, mounted and rode merrily away.

The sun had set, but the afterglow illumined all the western horizon, and flushed the snow-clad ground with a crimson tint.

They cantered on in the gayest spirits, talking as confidentially on their hopes and plans as if they themselves had been lovers instead of male friends, while the glory of the afterglow gradually faded from the heavens and the earth, and darkness gathered over all.

Still on the open, snow-white highroad, with the starlit sky above them, it was not as black as it would be when they should get into the forest through which they would have to pass on their way to The Notches. They were nearing that bourne now, and could see "the big woods," as the negroes called them, stretching like a tall, black barrier in the distance before them, and broken only by one indistinct opening, where their road entered the forest.

As they drew near, they saw ambling toward them, as if spent by a long run, a horse, saddled and bridled, but riderless!

"Good Heaven! here has been an accident!" ex-

claimed Godfrey, halting and jumping from his saddle, and meeting and seizing the bit of the horse, which seemed too tired to wish to resist capture. Godfrey led the now docile animal up to Oliver, and put the bridle into his hand, saying:

"Here, Noll, you lead the horse along after me. I must mount and fly with all speed to the rescue of the man who has been thrown somewhere down the road."

"All right, old fellow!" promptly responded young Pryor.

Then Godfrey, with all the physician's eager instinct to save life, threw himself into his saddle, put spurs to his horse, and flew down the road to the rescue.

It was so very dark when he entered the wood that he was compelled to slacken his speed while he peered around on either side, watching and listening to discover signs of the victim of the accident, and occasionally calling out, if anyone were in hearing.

"The poor man must be dead, wherever he was thrown," he murmured to himself.

Yet once again he called out, and at length received a response.

"Oh, for God's sake, help me!" cried a voice, wonderfully strong for an injured man, so Godfrey knew that here could be no fatal or very serious accident.

"Where are you?" he asked, as he dismounted.

"Here, in this infernal snowdrift on the side of the road," was the answer.

The snow was drifted only on the left, and, dark as it was, Godfrey could perceive it. He went immediately to the spot, and there found a large man floundering in the bottom of a soft drift that covered a deep gully.

"Are you much hurt?" kindly inquired Godfrey, as he got down on his hands and knees, peered into the ravine, and reached for the sufferer.

"Hurt?" savagely demanded the victim. "I am smothered in snow, and shaken all to pieces, and nearly

frozen! I shall get my death by this! But I'll be revenged!"

"Gently, my friend, gently!" said Godfrey, as he stretched himself far down into the deep ravine and caught the hands of the man.

Now he would undoubtedly have been pulled down by the weight of him whom he was trying to save had not Oliver reached the place in time to lend his aid.

"More scared than hurt; more angry than either!" whispered Godfrey, as his friend joined him.

And between them, yet with some difficulty, they raised the trader to the surface and set him on his feet, supporting him on each side.

"Now, then, sir, how do you feel? No bones broken! You had about as soft a fall as if it had been on a pile of feather beds!" said Godfrey, in an encouraging tone, for he perceived that the poor wretch had been terribly shaken, if not hurt in any other manner.

"How do I feel? Feel? I am all broken up! I shall get my death, I know it! And then I hope that beast will be hung for murder!" cried Marman, shivering and shuddering.

His hearers thought he referred to the runaway horse when he mentioned the "beast," and Godfrey hastened to say:

"Oh, no, you will not catch cold if proper precautions are taken! Your nervous excitement will help to save you. But we must get you under shelter at once! Can you sit on your horse? We have caught him and brought him back, and he seems very quiet now. And my friend and myself will ride on either side of you and help you, and so take you where you can get relief."

"Yes, yes! Anywhere! I can manage to keep my seat by holding on to the pommels with both hands if one of you gentlemen would take the bridle and lead the horse!" groaned the demoralized trader.

"I will undertake that, with pleasure," said Oliver,

"and Mr. Godfrey will ride on the other side, for better security. The nearest house is within a mile, and fortunately, we are going there, so it will not be the least out of our way. And now if you will allow us to help you into your saddle, we will take you to The Notches!"

"The Notches!"

The word acted on the trader like a spark of fire on gunpowder.

"The Notches! The Notches!" he furiously exclaimed, jerking himself away from his supporters and glaring at them. "That den of thieves and cutthroats! The Notches! Where I was robbed and bullied and put in peril of my life! I'd rather seek succor in the infernal regions! Oh, but I'll have the law of the head robber and ruffian yet, as sure as my name is Marman!"

"Softly, softly, sir! You are speaking of this gentleman's home and family," said Godfrey, severely.

"Oh, the man is mad! The mishap has turned his brain!" said Oliver, very sincerely and without the slightest sign of the fiery indignation that would have inflamed him if he had believed the enraged man to be in his responsible senses.

While they were occupied with Marman, the dark sky had been growing gradually lighter, and now the moon rose above the eastern range of mountains, and sent long lances of silvery light through the intricacies of the forest, and shone in spots and darts down on the snow-clad road.

Perhaps the trader was brought, in some degree, to reason by hearing that the house and proprietor he had just been abusing and threatening were the home and father of the young fellow who had helped to save his life; but if so, the only result was to silence his vituperative tongue, not to elicit any apology.

Godfrey, who considered him sane and responsible enough, refrained from pushing matters to an issue.

"If you cannot go to The Notches, how can we serve you, sir? For we must be going on presently," said Oliver.

"Thank you, I do not think I require much help now. If you will direct me to the right road to Horah Hall, I will be indebted to you," Marman said, surlily.

"You have passed the turning. This road leads to Mistyrock. You will have to retrace your steps about half a mile, and turn to the right when you come to the crossroads. We are going the same way so far, and will set you on the right track," said Oliver.

Marman thanked the young gentlemen in rather a sulky and shamefaced way, and allowed the two friends to help him on his horse, which by this time had so much of the spirit taken out of him that he held his head down, and took short, slow steps, and seemed to prefer walking to any other gait.

Marman took the bridle in his own hands, and the short procession moved on.

They soon reached the crossroads, where Oliver, who was in advance, drew up and said:

"Here you are, sir. Turn to the right and follow that road and it will take you to Horah Hall."

"Change your clothes as soon as you get there. Take a good drink of something as hot as you can swallow it, and then go to bed between blankets, in a room with a good fire," said Godfrey, who, being a physician, could not help giving good advice, even to the ruffian who had offended and disgusted him. In fact, Godfrey would have done the best he could for Old Nick if he had found him in need of his help on the highway.

Marman thanked them, and turned into the indicated country road.

Godfrey and Oliver resumed their ride, but had not gone many steps when they heard a low, jolly chuckling —the "kik! kik! kik!" of a negro's laughter—and saw

Tim standing on the side of the road, holding a great hound in a leash.

"Hello, Tim! Is that you?" exclaimed Oliver, as the two young men halted.

"Yes, Marse Noll! Kik! kik! kik! Yer seed him, didn' yer? I'se glee-ad he warn't kilt, bad as he is! Kik! kik! kik! We're yer fin' him, Marse Noll?" Tim inquired, with a show of interest.

"Do you mean the man who left us at the crossroads? Who was he, Tim?" questioned Oliver, unconsciously ignoring the negro's inquiry.

"Nigger buyer, Marse Noll, sah! Nigger buyer, sah!"

"Oh! I sniff a mice, Godfrey!" said Oliver, who would occasionally drop into slang.

Godfrey nodded and waited for more.

"Go on, Tim. Tell us all about it," said Oliver.

"Nigger buyer, sah! Had de cussed, infun'ly imper'-ence fer ter com' ter my 'spect'bl' marser's place ter make out as how he'd buyed Servy fo'm dat Marse Mur-dok Horah, an' 'sistin' on takin' 'an ca'yin' her 'way. An' marse jis order him off. An' w'en he 'fused ter go, marse tole me ter loose de dogs. An' den he went. Oh, Lor'! how he did went! Kik, kik, kik! Den ole marse holler ter me ter call dem dogs off. An' de dogs all com' back 'bedient 'nouf, all 'cept dat ole Tige! He wouldn' com' back! No, sah! Dat hun' dog seem'd ter hanker arter a spare rib offen dat fat ruffi'n! An' I run'd an' yell'd but it warn' a mite ob use. 'Course de houn' an' de horse outrun'd me! Las' I comes up yere out'n bref, an' w'at does I fine? W'y, I stumbles an' falls kechunk over sumfin' in de road! An' it wer' Tiger. Yes, sah! Tiger! St'ch out lik' he wer' dead yight 'cross de yoad! An' I jis kno'd in a minnit w'at 'ah happ'n'd, much as ef I seed it! I kno'd dat dere beas' had kep' a-jumpin' at dat dere hoss' heels till dat hoss foch him a ki'k w'at st'ech him out fer dead! an' den kep' on runnin' Lor' kno's w'ere! Yes, sah! An'

I t'ought de dog wer' done fer, as I dragged him yere ter de side ob de yoad, an' set down ter res' mysel'f an' discover my bref! Yes, sah! An' w'at yer fink, ge'men? Jis 'bout ten minutes ago, jis 'bout w'en I were finkin' 'bout goin' home, dis yere 'ceitful dog gits up on ter his four legs, good as new, an' gibs hisse'f a shake an' looks at me much as ter say: 'Now, ole man, I t'inks as we'll go home!' But he couldn't 'ceive me no mo' ter-night! so I jis take a rope outn my pocket an' tie it ter his collar! No mo' tricks wiv him dis time! No, sah!"

"Well, his advice was sensible, if you understood him aright! I think we had better get home as fast as we can, Tim," said Oliver.

And, as all three of the late wayfarers seemed of the same opinion, they started for The Notches, then a little more than half a mile distant.

CHAPTER XV.

ANOTHER EVENING AT THE NOTCHES.

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round;
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steaming column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.—COWPER.

When Servia had been so suddenly shoved into the parlor, and had had the door shut upon her by Col. Pryor, she stood still, frightened, hysterical.

The two girls, seated before the open wood fire, looked up from their lace work, and, seeing her condition, rose and hurried to her side.

"Why, what is the matter, Servia? What troubles you?" tenderly inquired Zenobia, taking the woman's hand.

"Oh! The negro buyer—Mr. Murdok Horah!" Servia gasped, incoherently.

Jemima and Zenobia looked at each other aghast. Neither spoke a word then. Jemima kindly took Servia by the hand and led her to the sofa at the back of the room, and made her sit down, while Zenobia went to the buffet on one side of the chimney, poured out a glass of water, and took it to the agitated woman. When Servia had drunk this, Jemima said:

"Now, try to compose yourself and tell us all about it."

Zenobia put her arm around Servia's neck and took her hand affectionately.

Servia sighed profoundly, and told of the sudden call and claim of the slave trader.

"And he is out there yet! I can heard him talking!" she concluded, with a shiver of fear.

Jemima jumped up and ran down the room to the front windows to take an observation.

Zenobia seized Servia in her arms and burst into a paroxysm of sobs and tears.

"Oh!" she cried, as she pressed the woman to her bosom; "I felt so sure—so sure!—mamma would have left you free! You were so faithful and affectionate, and such a great favorite with her! Oh, why should she have left all her other servants at liberty, and leave you, the most worthy of them all, in bondage? And to the mercy of such a man as Murdok Horah! She knew his character before she died! Didn't he break her heart? Oh, it is too, too cruel to leave you in his power!" she raved, with the first bitter thought she had ever entertained of her foster mother.

"I also thought she would have emancipated me. She must have had some powerful motive for not doing what she had led me to expect. And, of course, she could not have foreseen this," said the woman, who was slowly recovering her composure.

"She should not have subjected you to such a risk! Oh, how could she? How could she?" sobbed Zenobia, as if her heart would break.

"Don't cry so, my darling! Don't cry so! It will all come right!" said Servia, smoothing the dark curls from the flushed forehead of the weeping girl and soothing her as she had been accustomed to do in her babyhood. "If I am nervous, darling, it is only because I was so terribly frightened. I could not get over the shock all at once. But you know Master Col. Pryor promised to save me from the slave trader, and he will do it."

"Then he will buy you, Servia?" inquired the girl, wiping her eyes.

"I suppose so, darling. It is the only way by which he can save me, you know. And all that troubles me is the large amount of money that trader will ask, just

out of revenge, or just because he knows the colonel would give it rather than see me dragged away."

"But, he is not rich! Oh, suppose he should not be able to pay it!" exclaimed Zenobia, with a shudder, and on the verge of another paroxysm of tears.

"I know that he will keep his word. I do not know by what means, but he will do it. Do you remember poor Ben, Miss Zenobia?" she suddenly inquired.

"Oh, yes, Servia, I remember. He was with us in that awful shed. He was the largest man I ever saw. And he was always crying about home and 'ole mammy.' Looking back on it, I think it was strange that so big a man should have been such a baby."

"Ah, my dear, you don't know! You don't know! Ben was a strange mixture. As simple as a child, as tender as a lamb; yet, on occasion, as brave as a lion. He was so soft, for a giant like he was, that people who did not know him well might take him for an idiot; but it was only his loving nature that made him so. And that same loving nature made him as bold as a hero in defense or rescue. Oh, yes! When old Master Michael Godfrey died, Ben grieved so long and deeply that we thought he, too, would have died. And, on the other hand, when Mr. Jack Perry's house caught fire and everybody got safe out of it except—as some one remembered—a poor orphan child that had been left in the attic, and no one had the courage to risk a horrible death for its rescue, poor, soft Ben never stopped a minute to think of the danger, but plunged straight into the burning building and up the blazing stairs, and brought the child down wrapped up in a blanket, and unharmed, although his trousers were burned off and he was so severely injured that we thought his legs would have to be amputated. There, my child—that was Ben."

"Poor, tender, brave Ben! I wonder where he is now?" mused Zenobia, pensively.

"Ah, Heaven knows! I do not! He is in his Heavenly Father's keeping, wherever he is, and neither man nor devil can take him out of His hands. But, darling, what I was going to tell you about Ben when I first mentioned his name was this: That Ben would be here with us now if Col. Pryor could have secured him, for when he went back to the slave pen at that time, and saw Ben crying like a child after home and friends —and, last of all, poor, simple fellow, after me, his last remaining tie to the past—Col. Pryor, noble soul, bargained to buy him and bring him here, so as to satisfy him. But in the darkness of the night the wicked trader stole him away. And since that we have never heard of poor Ben!"

"Oh, Servia! Suppose the trader were to get hold of you before Uncle Pryor has—has——" began Zenobia, but her voice faltered and failed.

"There is no danger, my dear love! None! Master Pryor assured me that the man should never look upon my face again. And he will keep his word. Oh, may the Lord in Heaven bless him! I always did love and revere him, from the time he tried to rescue poor Ben. But, now! Oh, my darling! I mean to devote my whole life and all my heart and soul and strength to his service!"

"Uncle Pryor is good. Oh, he is very good! And he never pretends to be. He always laughs," mused Zenobia, as if she had a problem to solve.

"Darling," continued Servia, "I am going to tell you something. It always went against my feelings to call any man master, or any lady mistress. The sinful pride lurking in the depths of my nature sickened at it. Yes, it did, my precious! But, oh! Miss Zenobia, this gentleman, this noble, generous heart—from the depths of my soul I shall glory in calling him master! My dear master! My dear and honored master!" fervently breathed Servia, raising her large, dark eyes, full of fire

and tenderness, glowing and melting, to the face of the young girl.

There was silence between them for a few moments, broken at last by Servia, who said:

"Oh, my darling child, I am so happy to think you are going to marry my master's son. Oh, my love, he is not rich; but if he had not a cent in this world, if he and you would have to go out to get your own living, he by plowing and digging, and you by doing all your own housework, washing and cooking, still I should think you the happiest woman in the whole world to have master's son for your husband."

"I know it, Servia! I know it!" fervently assented Zenobia.

"Yet, still, I am happy and thank God to know that you both will be fairly well off in this world's comforts," added the woman.

A loud, ringing, resonant peal of laughter startled them both.

They turned simultaneously, to see that it came from Jemima, who stood looking out of the front window.

She turned at the same instant and came toward them, still laughing immoderately.

"What is the joke, Jim?" inquired Zenobia.

"Oh, such fun! That brutal trader! He could not be persuaded to depart in peace, so Uncle Nat called upon the dogs to use their influence with that contumacious person. And he is gone. Oh, yes, he is gone as if the horned and hoofed enemy were behind him!" exclaimed Jemima, amid peals of laughter.

Just then Col. Pryor came in, and joined in the mirthful chorus.

Suddenly Zenobia grew grave.

"Oh, uncle, if the hounds should hurt him!" she said, opening her eyes wide with fear.

"Oh, no danger. Tim has orders to call them off when the fellow is clear of the grounds."

"But if that terrible Russian bloodhound gets after him! He is not trained to obedience yet."

"Tim will not loose him," said the colonel. But, as we have seen, he was mistaken. Tim had loosed him.

"Here, Servia, my good girl, fill my pipe for me. And have no fear, for you are as safe from all harm from that man and his kind as either of these young ladies," said the colonel, turning to the woman, and handing her his brierwood pipe.

This was the first time that he had ever required a service of any kind from the girl, and he did it now from pure kindness, as an expression of his good will.

"I do feel quite safe, my master, and I thank and bless you for the feeling of perfect safety you give me," she said, bowing her head, as she took the pipe.

"Pooh! pooh! You'll know better by and by than to give me all the credit," laughed the jolly colonel.

And when Servia had filled the pipe, and offered it to him with an air of worship, he thanked her as he would have thanked Jemima or Zenobia, and then turned to leave the room, as he was accustomed to do whenever he began to smoke. But both the girls went to him, one on each side, and Jemima said:

"Now, nunks, no more of that. Just you stop it right here and now! I don't dislike your smoke. And as for Zenobia—she is Spanish. 'Nough said."

"Don't you really dislike it, my dear?" inquired the colonel, turning to Zenobia.

"No, uncle, I do like it. Your smoke, I mean," very sincerely replied the girl.

The good man heaved a sigh of positive relief, beamed on the girls, and went and sank down comfortably in his well-cushioned armchair in the chimney corner.

"Now, then, uncle," said Jemima, who knew his passionate love for music, and who had a fine voice of her own, "what shall we sing for you?"

"What! Fragrant tobacco, music and two lovely

nieces, who are so good to me! And one so soon to be my daughter! Oh, but I am a happy man, and a grateful one, as I ought to be," said the colonel, looking affectionately at his young people.

"But what shall we sing for you, uncle?" persisted Jemima.

"Oh, anything you like, my loves. Stay! stay!" he suddenly exclaimed, with a merry twinkle in his laughing blue eyes. "Yes, sing one of Moore's melodies. Sing 'Love's Young Dream.' That will suit us all."

The girls seated themselves at the piano, searched several old music books, and, after considerable trouble, found the old-fashioned song, which had been such a favorite with their mothers, and began:

"Oh! the days are gone, when beauty bright
My heart's chain wove;
When my dream of life, from morn till night,
Was love, still love.
New hopes may bloom,
And days may come
Of milder, calmer beam,
But there's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream;
No, there's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream!"

They sang the whole song through, Col. Pryor drawing his pipe from his mouth, and going to the piano and joining in the refrain.

Then they sang several other favorites of the colonel.

Meanwhile, Servia, by a little diplomatic management of Druse, procured the privilege of setting the table for dinner, and came in and out so softly as not to disturb the music.

The room was only lighted by the blazing and glowing pine and hickory wood fire, and Servia was just wondering whether she should disturb the singers by

lighting the candles, when the sound of horses' hoofs ringing on the frozen ground as they approached the house, startled everyone.

"That's the boys!" exclaimed the colonel, more gladly than grammatically.

They heard Otto fly to open the door.

The next moment Godfrey and Oliver came bustling in. They stopped in the hall only long enough to take off their fur caps and overcoats, and then hurried into the parlor.

Nat Pryor gave them a boistering welcome. When Godfrey had shaken hands with the colonel, and thanked him again for all those good offices with his sweetheart's father, which had been crowned with so much success, and had heard the colonel's laughing disclaimers, he turned to her whose heart he had won, and, taking both her hands, murmured:

"My own Jemima! I am so blessed, so grateful! Nothing is now wanting to my happiness but for you to fix the day when we may be united."

"You must talk to Dr. Bland, Gilbert, and I must consult my dear uncle," she replied.

"I have talked to my dear old friend; or, to speak more truly, he has anticipated my wishes, that I scarcely could have ventured to mention to him. He has begged me to persuade you to come to us as soon as possible. He will receive my wife with joy and love, even as his own daughter.

An uproarious burst of laughter from Nat Pryor startled them, and made them turn sharply around. Noll had been telling his father of their adventure with the hunted and fallen slave trader.

"Ho! ho! ho! Ha! ha! ha! Oh, I'm glad the rascal was not hurt, however. How came that scamp, Tim, to let Tiger loose?" demanded the colonel.

"Why, I suppose to give the fellow something worse

than a fright for his behavior about Servia!" laughingly replied Noll.

"And the savage beast might have killed the man! Oh, good Heaven! I must give Tim a talking to. But how is the poor hound? Was he injured much?" inquired the colonel.

"Ah, that is much more to the purpose. No, sir; the hound was not seriously hurt, I thank Heaven! Only stunned by the kick of the horse."

Dinner was brought in and set on the table, and the family circle gathered around the board.

When the meal was over, Col. Pryor said:

"Now, boys, come into the study with me. I have something to say to you both. Possess your souls in patience, my dears," he added, turning to the two young girls; "I will send them back in half an hour, or in less time."

So saying, he left the parlor, followed by Godfrey and Oliver.

When they reached the study, the colonel stirred the fire into a blaze, threw himself into his leathern chair, and motioned for the two young men to seat themselves.

When they had done so, he began to speak:

"Now, boys, I have been young, and in love myself, and I have not forgotten the time, nor the experience. I know how eager you both are. Oh, bless you, I know all about it. Now let me tell you that there is no good reason why you should not both be married at once, or as soon as you can get your sweethearts to name the day. We will have a double wedding in yonder old parlor. The only difficulty will be in a friendly dispute between Bland and myself, as to which shall have Godfrey and Jemima. Of course, I shall want you both, Gilbert! And, of course, I shall have to give in, I suppose, as I always do to Bland. Especially as he will have reason on his side. He will tell me that I shall

have Oliver and Zenobia, and should be satisfied with them, and that he has nobody unless he gets Godfrey and Jemima, and that Godfrey's professional place is in his office. All true enough. And I shall have to submit to the inevitable, I suppose. It is a fact that Godfrey has not taken his degree yet, but my old friend assures me that you are quite prepared to do so, my boy. And that all you have to do is to go to the next commencement in June and matriculate, and pass your examination. And we will all go to Charlottesville with you. Come, now, what do you say, boys? Am I to have all the talking to myself? On such an interesting topic, too?" suddenly exclaimed the colonel, with one of his bursts of irrepressible laughter.

If neither of the young men had spoken it was because their hearts were too full for speech.

Now they simultaneously sprang up, as if moved by the same impulse, seized each a hand of their friend and father, and pressed it to their lips and hearts. But neither spoke as yet.

"Well, well! Now we will go back to the girls," said the colonel, rising.

CHAPTER XVI.

NIGHT AT HORAH HALL.

It hath pleased the devil, Drunkenness, to
Give place to the devil, Wrath;
To be now a sensible
Man, and by and by a fool, and presently
A beast!—SHAKESPEARE.

Marman was, as has been hinted, much more terrified than injured. Indeed, he was not injured in the least degree. His fall in the deep pit full of soft snow had not given him a scratch or a bruise. Nor were his clothes wet. The night was too cold for the snow to melt.

So when he found himself in his saddle on the back of Prance, with all the freshness taken out of the animal by his fright and race before the hounds, and now that his head was turned homeward, trotting along soberly enough, Marman began to realize that he, himself, was neither killed nor wounded. The jogging motion of the horse shook the snow well off Marman's overcoat, so that when he reached Horah Hall he was in no evil plight of body, though he was in a most diabolical temper of mind.

He had intended to go directly to Celia's cabin, where he expected to find Horah as he had left him, but, seeing a light shining through the transom above the hall door, he rode up to the house, dismounted, tied his horse, and knocked.

Celia opened to him.

"Where's your master?" he surlily demanded, as he entered the hall and threw down his riding whip.

"In his own bedroom, upstairs, sir," replied the woman.

"Show me up there, then. I must see him immediately," peremptorily commanded Marman.

"If you please, sir, my master is asleep, and I have positive orders never to wake him," said Celia, deprecatingly.

"The deuce you have! And what am I to do while he sleeps?" rudely demanded Marman.

"If you please, sir, if you will step into the oak parlor, you will find a good fire, and your supper laid out and waiting for you, and I hope you will make yourself comfortable until Mr. Horah wakes," said the woman, as she walked down to the rear of the hall and opened the door leading into the late Mrs. Horah's favorite sitting room.

Marman, growling and grumbling, divested himself of his fur cap and overcoat, hung them on the rack, and followed Celia into the parlor, whose warm, cozy and attractive appearance might have soothed his exasperated temper.

The open, wood fire was blazing brightly, while on the clean, white marble hearth, within the fender, sat a coffee pot and several covered dishes, all of which emitted appetizing steam and odors. Before the fire stood a round table spread with a white damask cloth, and adorned with fine, white china. On one side, between the table and the fire, stood a comfortable easy-chair.

Marman surveyed the scene with satisfaction, and yet he spoke in the spirit of fault-finding as he sank into the chair, and said:

"See here, girl, haven't you got such articles as a bootjack and a pair of slippers handy?"

"I will see, sir," replied Celia, leaving the room.

Presently she returned, bringing what was required.

And while Marman was engaged drawing off his boots, she busied herself with setting his supper on the table.

"Great land of liberty! Who wore these canoes?" he exclaimed, holding up the slippers.

Celia looked at him, but disdained to reply.

"Who did, anyway?" he repeated.

"Mr. Horah, sir," she coldly replied.

"Did, eh? Well, I never saw a white man with such enlarged understanding as to require such long boats!" said Marman, with a loud guffaw.

"Will you eat your supper now, sir?" inquired the woman, placing a chair to the table.

But Marman, instead of taking the one offered, whirled his own seat around, and immediately stuck his fork into a broiled pullet and transferred the whole of it from the dish to his plate, and began to cut it up.

Celia poured out a cup of coffee, and placed it, with the sugar bowl and cream jug, near his hand, and then said:

"Is there anything else I can get you, sir?"

"I would like something strong to begin with," he replied.

Celia went to her late mistress' little corner cupboard and took from it a small flask of chartreuse, which she set before him.

"What in thunder is this?" he inquired, unscrewing the silver top and sniffing the liquor.

"A very strong cordial, sir. Mr. Horah has all the brandy up in his room, and I cannot get it. I hope that will do!"

"Famously!" exclaimed Marman, after pouring out and gulping down a half tumbler of the beverage.

"Anything else I can bring you, sir?" inquired Celia.

"No, nothing," replied Marman. "Fire and brimstone! How hot that liquor is! I shouldn't dare to repeat the dose. What did you say it was?"

"Chartreuse, sir."

"Well, I should think it was red-hot enough to burn a hole in a fellow's gullet."

"If there is nothing else you require, I hope you will excuse me, sir," said Celia, turning to leave the room.

"Why, where are you going?" uneasily demanded Marman.

"To take the horse to the stable, and see to him."

"Who? You?"

"Yes, sir. There is no manservant about the place, and the animal must not suffer."

"No, to be sure. And you know just what to do? Rub down, hot mash, and all that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, off with you, then. But get back as soon as you can. I may want—something else," said Marman.

Celia left the room.

"Valuable wench, that! Handsome, strong, healthy and equal to anything in an emergency. Fine woman, capital cook, neat housemaid, and handy body servant, hostler, all rolled into one. I wonder why Horah can't let me have her. I will have her, if money will buy her! Why, that wench could be everything to me. I need not keep another servant in the house if I had her. And now to think I have to keep two, a man and a woman, only to wait on me. I'll reform that! This woman can fill every requirement! I mean to have her!" concluded Marman, as he scraped the bones, which were all that was left of the broiled pullet, off his plate and helped himself to a large rasher of fried bacon and a couple of muffins.

By the time he had finished his supper—having emptied the coffeepot and cleared the table of everything edible on it—and had turned again toward the fire, laid himself back in his easy-chair and raised his slippered feet to the mantel, he was startled by hearing a bell ring.

"Ah! You are awake, are you, Master Murdok? Well, I shall not disturb myself to answer your bell, and there is no one in the house at present to do it, so

I reckon you will have to amuse yourself in that way for some minutes to come," soliloquized Marman, drawing a cigar case from his pocket and selecting a fine Havana, which he proceeded to light and smoke at his leisure, and quite enjoying the impatient ringing of Horah's bell.

"Ha! ha! ha! Go it, my friend! Oh, I'll bet now you are swearing the roof off the house," laughed Marman, as he drew the cigar from his lips and shook off the ashes.

"But here comes the woman. I hope she will not have the empty brandy bottle thrown at her head when she goes to answer the bell," he added, as Celia entered the room.

"Will you have anything more, sir?" she politely inquired.

"Oh, no; nothing more for me. But there is a madman ringing upstairs loud enough to fetch the fire engines about our ears, if there were any in the neighborhood," said Marman, with a laugh.

"I hear the bell. I am going, sir," said Celia. And she hurried from the room to answer the summons.

Marman stretched out his limbs, puffed at his cigar, took his ease, and enjoyed himself generally.

"Now, I would just like to take another pull at that nectar of the gods—the infernal ones, Pluto and the rest—but I dare not. I must keep my head clear while in Mr. Murdok Horah's house," he mused, taking up the flask of chartreuse and sniffing at it, holding it up to the light and squinting at it.

"Oh, come now! There's only about a wineglassful left in the flask. I will venture on that, as I am quite sober yet," he said. And he drained the bottle and swallowed the liquor.

"Well, I am glad there is no more to tempt me. Ah, here comes the wench. To summon me to 'Master Murdok.' And won't there be tall swearing when he hears

what I have to tell him! And I wonder what he will do in regard to that beastly country blackguard? We have the law on our side, that is certain. I should think that rascally ruffian, with his hounds, might be subject to a criminal prosecution. And I think, if I know the 'gentleman' upstairs, that he will stop at nothing to prosecute the scoundrel to the full extent of the law."

"If you please, sir, Mr. Murdok will see you now," said Celia, quietly entering the room.

"Ten o'clock! He had been asleep all day, and has waked up refreshed. I have been tossed about on the pitchforks of devils. I want rest, and he invites me to an interview. All right. I'll have the pleasure of putting him in the most infernal passion he ever had in his life," growled Marman, as he rose, stretched himself, and followed Celia from the room.

She led him up the broad staircase to the upper hall, and opened a door on the left landing into a spacious front chamber, in which stood a tall, four-posted, white-curtained bedstead, that gleamed dimly through the room, which was only faintly lighted from the smoldering embers in the open fireplace, because the inflamed eyes and congested head of the drunkard required shadow. And perhaps he loved darkness, because his deeds were evil.

"Don't stand there like a derned fool! There! there! Don't grope about like a blind man! Come here, here!" exclaimed Horah.

Marman approached the bed, on the side next the door, where the curtains had been looped up, and where Horah lay among a disordered array of white bedclothes, and smelling like a brandy barrel.

"There, comfound you! Be careful! Don't upset that stand of bottles and glasses!" he growled, as Marman blundered about. "Sit down, can't you? There's a chair. Your eyes will get used to the darkness pres-

ently. Now tell me how you fared at The Notches. Did you see the wench? Did you approve of her?" he inquired, when Marman, groping about, had found a chair and seated himself beside the bed.

"How I fared? You shall hear, sir," said the trader, all his smoldering wrath aroused by the question. "Your girl slammed the door in my face and bolted it behind her. And your colonel set the dogs on me!"

Horah sprang up into a sitting posture and stared in stupefaction on the speaker for a few moments, and then inquired:

"Set the dogs on you?"

"Yes, he did! May Satan fly away with him!" growled Marman.

"Tell me all about it," said Horah.

"It seems to me that you take this very coolly, Mr. Horah, but you shall hear, sir! You shall hear!" exclaimed the trader, angrily; but he soon controlled himself, and, with much warmth of exaggeration, gave a graphic description of his adventure at The Notches, his flight for life before the pursuing hounds, ending in his being thrown from his horse and tossed into the snow-drift over a deep gully, into which he sank.

Here Murdok Horah fell back upon his pillows, roaring with laughter. Not all his latest, furious wrath against Col. Pryor for resisting the sale of the girl could restrain him from giving way to the mirthful delight he felt in the ludicrous discomfiture of the trader.

"Upon my honor, Mr. Horah, you receive such news in a very original manner. You seem to really enjoy my sufferings," angrily exclaimed Marman.

"Oh, don't make me go off again! It's fatiguing! I am glad you are not seriously hurt. But you shall have ample justice, satisfaction and revenge to-morrow. Meantime, how did you get out of that pit of snow and recover your horse?"

Marman, now speaking rather sulkily, told all about his rescue and relief by the two young men.

"Noll Pryor and Gil Godfrey, for a wager!" exclaimed Horah.

"Yes. One of them said he was the son of the old rascal at The Notches, sure enough!" sulkily growled Marman.

"Well, man, you are safe, life and limb! And you ought to be glad of it, and not be in such a violent temper," said Horah. And it was certainly edifying to hear him, of all men, rebuking another for indulgence in angry passions.

"Yes," said Marman, "safe in life and limb. But just look at my trousers! Look at them! Almost torn off me by the teeth of those blasted hounds!" And he lifted his legs upon the side of the bed.

Again Horah burst into a rude, unfeeling roar of laughter.

Marman began to curse and swear.

"Oh, bother, man! I can't help it! It's all too devilish funny! Never mind about your trousers. If the cloth hadn't given way the dogs would have pulled you down. And then you would have been done for. 'All for the best,' Marman, as the goody-goodies say," remarked Horah, still laughing.

"They are the only pair I have down here with me. And I must say, Mr. Murdok Horah, that you do not treat me as you ought to treat a gentleman."

"Neither do I think so," said Horah, with quiet sarcasm, which, however, was lost on Marman. "But now, about these nether garments of yours. Of course, you cannot wear them, but you are welcome to the pick of mine. We are of about the same build, and I reckon you can wear them."

"Thank you," said the trader, coldly and noncommittally. "But now about this girl you sold me—the

girl that Pryor wouldn't give up. What is to be done?" anxiously inquired Marman.

"You showed him the bill of sale?" inquired Horah.

"I told you that I did," sulkily answered Marman.

"And Pryor read it?"

"I told you that, too. Read it, and laughed in my face, and advised me to be off."

"And do you know why he behaved in that manner?"

"Because he was excited, I suppose," exclaimed Marman.

"Oh, of course. That goes without saying. But he had another reason," slowly and thoughtfully remarked Horah.

"What?" bluntly demanded Marman.

"Why, my good fellow," mocked Horah, "that bill was neither signed by a witness nor sealed by a notary. He may have considered it a forgery, and you an impostor. You are a stranger in these parts, you know, and you went to him alone."

"Why, then, did you send me on a fool's errand, Mr. Horah? This looks very much like a fraud!" angrily exclaimed the trader.

"Fraud!" cried Horah, savagely springing up and glaring at the speaker.

"I beg your pardon, sir—I do, indeed. I meant no offense, really. I hardly knew what I was saying. Think no more of it, I beg you," said Marman, in bodily fear of the wild beast that he had aroused.

"Well, then, take care of yourself, Marman. Take care. Fraud is an ugly word. And I am an ugly customer when roused. That bill of sale, you know very well, was no more than your authority for viewing the girl. No money had been paid down for her. The transaction hung on your approval at sight. I did not think, however, that Pryor would have been so careful. Evidently he took you for a confidence man, and therefore warned you off his place. He had you

hunted off when you refused to go quietly. I am afraid he has the law on his side," said Horah, who still bore a grudge against Marman for his use of that objectionable word "fraud," notwithstanding his apology, and even presumed on that apology to speak aggravatingly to the trader.

"Then what do you propose to do in the matter, Mr. Horah? Leave the thing just where it is?" coldly inquired the trader.

"Oh, no; by no means. All this shall be remedied to-morrow. My head aches horribly, horribly, I assure you, but I hope to feel better to-morrow. Then we will drive over together to Mistyrock, see a notary, and have this affair regularly put in shape. Bill of sale signed, sealed and delivered. And then we will go together to The Notches and take possession—you of the girl, and I of my beautiful ward. There's a beauty, Marman! Though, of you believe me, her complexion is really darker than either Celia's or Servia's; and her eyes and hair are as black as jet. And, by the way, while we are out, we must see about those runaway niggers. The vermin can't have got far, you know. That would be an utter impossibility. Did you happen to hear of any trace of them during your ride to-day?"

"Nothing whatever."

"They are starving and freezing somewhere in the woods among the hills. I expect to lose several of them by death, and to have huge doctor's bills to pay for others, after such exposure. But I swear to one thing —that all those who survive shall wish that they had died, even if the devil had got them!" growled Horah, with somber rage.

"I have no doubt of it," dryly assented Marman.

"Well, now I will bid you good-night. We must be up and off early in the morning," concluded the host, thus unceremoniously dismissing his guest.

"Good-night," returned Marman, very glad to make his escape from the room.

Horah, as soon as he was left alone, turned to the stand beside his bed, on which stood several brandy bottles, some empty, and others full, filled and refilled his glass, and continued drinking until he had stupefied himself, and at last sank into a heavy sleep, sometimes disturbed by frightful dreams, tossings and groanings.

It was well that there was no lamp or candle near him, and that the apartment was lighted only by the smoldering logs in the fireplace, or he, in his drunken condition, might have burned himself in his bed.

Meanwhile, Marman found his way to the comfortable room that had been prepared for him on the previous night, and where everything was so well arranged for his accommodation as to call forth from him new praises of that "jewel of a wench," who was so admirably fitted to fulfill all the duties that might be required in a bachelor's establishment, and to look as handsome as Hebe all the time.

Marman was very much fatigued, so he got into bed as soon as possible, and dropped asleep as his head sank upon the pillow.

He slept until very late the next morning. When he awoke and looked at his watch he was surprised to see that it was near nine o'clock.

The room was quite light from the sun's rays that streamed through the chinks of the closed shutters. He saw hanging on the chair beside his bed a new pair of heavy cheviot trousers, which he was very glad to appropriate.

He arose in haste, dressed himself quickly, and hurried down to the oak parlor, where he found the fire brightly burning, and the table set for breakfast, and Celia sewing by the window.

"Where is your master?" he inquired, throwing himself into a chair.

"In bed, sir. He is not well this morning," replied the woman, sadly.

"H'm!" grunted Marman.

"He had been asking for you, sir. He would like to see you as soon as you have had your breakfast," Celia added.

"All right, my good girl. Let me have it as soon as possible," said Marman.

Celia left the room, and after an absence of a few minutes, returned, bearing a waiter in her hands, laden with every edible that could tempt the daintiest or satisfy the hungriest appetite.

Marman made a hearty meal, and then arose from the table, and said:

"I am ready to go to your master."

"He is expecting you, sir. You will find him in the same place you left him last night," said Celia, who showed no disposition to attend the trader to her master's chamber.

"All right," replied Marman, and he walked out of the parlor and up the stairs. Arrived at Horah's door, he knocked and received a surly order to "Come in."

He opened the door and entered the room, where the close air reeked with the fumes of brandy. He went up to the bed where Horah lay in an utter confusion of tumbled blankets, sheets and pillows, which he had kicked and tossed about in his drunken restlessness. His head was bound in wet towels. His face was bloated and inflamed, and his eyes were bloodshot and heavy; his whole appearance was disgusting and revolting even to so rough and coarse a man as the trader.

"How do you find yourself this morning, sir?" inquired Marman.

"As if I had passed a night in the realms of Pluto!" emphatically answered Horah.

"Sorry to hear it."

"The most infernal headache that ever cursed a

man! No getting up this morning. But business must be attended to. Take —— Oh, pshaw! I mean have a horse put to the carryall, and drive—you know—to—to Mistyrock. Get—— Oh, curse this headache! Get a notary and a witness, and fetch them here to the house, to—to—you know—sign and seal that—that—bill of sale. Oh, confound it! Tell them I'll pay them for their time in coming and going. Not that their time is valuable. Lazy loafers! Sitting smoking all day long in their offices, with their heels upon their writing desks. Why don't you go along? What are you waiting for?" angrily demanded Horah.

"Waiting for nothing, but for you to finish what you were trying to say," dryly answered Marman.

"Well, I've done! Now be off!" exclaimed Horah.

"Poor wretch!" mused Marman, as he left the drunkard's room.

Some little movement of his better nature, or, perhaps it was the good humor consequent upon a highly satisfactory breakfast, and the enjoyable condition of body in which he found himself, influenced him to spare Celia the coachman's task, and to go himself to the stable and harness the horse to the carryall, with which he started for Mistyrock half an hour later.

Meanwhile, under Celia's skillful ministrations, Horah grew somewhat better toward the afternoon.

Thus it happened that when Marman returned with the notary and the notary's clerk, Horah was able to receive them in the oak parlor.

When the document in question was regularly signed, sealed and delivered, and refreshments had been served, Horah turned to the trader and said:

"Now, Marman, you will take these gentlemen back to Mistyrock. By the time you get there it will be too late to do anything at The Notches to-day. So you had better put up the horse and carriage, and take a room at the Washington House for to-night. In the morning

get a constable and a posse, if necessary, and go with them to The Notches, and demand your property. Then see if the gentleman will dare to resist the officers of the law. And hark you, Marman! You are to be at no personal expense. I will foot all the bills—hotel and everything," he added.

"I think that will be right," said Marman. And a few minutes later he set out with the notary and the clerk to return to Mistyrock, there to spend the night, and fully resolved to carry out Murdok Horah's plan to get a constable and proceed to The Notches to demand Servia, and, in case of resistance, to take her by force.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MAJESTY OF THE LAW.

It was quite dark when Marman, with the notary and the clerk, reached Mistyrock. He set the two men down at their doors, and then drove to the Washington House, gave his horse and carryall to the hostler, and entered the barroom.

It was an hour when the place was sure to be filled with loafing politicians and village gossips. First, he secured a room for the night, and then ordered drinks for the company, by way of an ingratiating introduction of himself. He treated the crowd liberally—all at Murdok Horah's expense—but drank very moderately himself. He never could afford to confuse his own brain.

He became popular with his companions. But, nevertheless, when he told the story of his "outrageous treatment" at The Notches, it was received with more laughter than sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho!" resounded through the barroom.

"Why, man," said one, "are you such a stranger that you don't know old Nat Pryor better than to go to his place on such business? Why, he cusses himself bald and gray, night and day, for owning niggers, though it seems to me that they own him! As to selling one—whe-e-w! Some people keep dogs to hunt foxes, and some to hunt niggers! but the colonel, he keeps dogs to hunt nigger buyers. Everybody knows it."

"I didn't know it, or I never would have gone near his wild-beast's den—unguarded, I mean. But to-morrow, please the pigs, I shall go there protected by all the majesty of the law!" exclaimed Marman, with a swaggering air.

"Oh, you will, eh? I wish you well out of the scrape.

He is a grim customer, that colonel," laughed the man.

"Colonel, indeed!" sneered Marman. "Colonel of what? Colonel of corncobs! All your big bugs down here are colonels, or generals, or judges, just as it is up Washington way, where every other man you meet is 'Prof.' Somebody-or-other. Colonel be jiggered!" exclaimed Marman, and, being very much offended, he took up his candle and went to his room.

Early the next morning, Marman, fired with the desire and anticipation of a triumph over Col. Pryor, arose, and while he breakfasted, ordered the horse to be put to the carryall.

Half an hour later, accompanied by the county constable and two "specials," he set out for The Notches.

He occupied the driver's seat, held himself extremely erect, and talked very loftily about the "majesty of the law," much to the edification of his rustic companions, who had never heard of "majesty" except in obnoxious connection with the late King George III.

About halfway between Mistyrock and The Notches they were met by two young men on horseback, to whom the constable and two specials bowed respectfully, and received polite bows in return.

They were Godfrey and Oliver, who had rescued Marman from the snowpit, and caught his horse for him. But that obligation did not prevent the incensed negro trader from glaring at them with a look of malice and triumph. Godfrey and Oliver "smiled superior," and passed on.

"Them's two of the garrison. Wonder they did not turn round and go back to help resist," sneered Marman.

"Oh, there will be no resistance of the law," said the constable, positively.

"I think there was some unlawful resistance the other day!" growled Marman.

"Oh, no, sir. You are mistaken. The colonel's ac-

tion was impolite, sartinly, but not unlawful. If you have given me a correct account of the affair, he had the law on his side. And you will see the difference, now that the law is on your side."

"Yes, we shall see the difference, I expect," said Marman, with a harsh laugh, as he straightened himself up with more stiffness than before.

"I should like to see that wretch slam the door in my face this time! Or the grand 'colonel' hunt me off his cursed cornfields, either!" he concluded, as he whipped up his horse to greater speed.

But while Marman is pursuing his triumphal course we must precede him to The Notches.

* * * * * * * *

It was a very happy family party that was assembled around the breakfast table in the old parlor on that morning.

There was the jolly colonel, the two "dear girls" and his two "fine boys," as he delighted to call them. Servia had recovered her usual cheerful serenity, and waited on the table.

The conversation turned on the prospects of the betrothed lovers, which were discussed freely and openly, without either reserve or embarrassment. It was decided, in consideration of the recent death of Mrs. Horah, that the double marriage should be celebrated very quietly on the first of the next month, in the parlor of The Notches, and in presence of the family only, including Dr. Bland, whom they were very happy to consider one of themselves.

That, immediately after the quiet wedding breakfast, the young couple should start on a short wedding trip—Oliver and Zenobia to Richmond for a week, Godfrey and Jemima to Washington for the same length of time, in the hope that they should meet Maj. Abbace, who was still detained on duty at the Indian

bureau, without being able to get leave to come down to see his daughter.

On their return, Oliver and Zenobia should take up their permanent abode at The Notches, and Godfrey and Jemima should settle at Mistyrock. These plans, though concluded among themselves, were held subject to the approval of Dr. Bland, for it was just possible that the good doctor might not find it convenient to spare Godfrey from the office for the time in question, though, on the other hand, knowing the doctor's character as well as we do, we feel sure that it is quite impossible that he should not sacrifice his own convenience for the happiness of others.

"Well, my dear boy," exclaimed Nat Pryor, as they rose from the breakfast table, "you just bring Bland here with you to-night. Or, if it should happen that you cannot both leave the office at the same time, deny yourself, and stay there while he comes to spend the evening with us, and discuss those points in which you are commonly interested. We will take care of your interests, my fine fellow."

"As if I needed to be assured of that," said Godfrey, as he drew on his riding coat.

A few minutes later Godfrey and Oliver had started for Mistyrock; Godfrey for the doctor's office, and Oliver for the lawyer's.

They had been gone about half an hour.

Jemima and Zenobia were up in their bedrooms, which communicated, looking over their wardrobe, calculating what was absolutely indispensable, and what might be dispensed with in the outfit for the approaching double wedding; and they were continually passing from one room to the other in their consultations.

Piles of useful clothing and girlish finery loaded the beds and the chairs of both rooms.

"There is a prevailing superstition," said Jemima, "that a bride must wear nothing that she ever wore be-

fore her marriage. That all her clothing must be new. Now, that is utter nonsense, so far as I am concerned, and so poor as Godfrey and myself must be for some years to come."

"But your father's gift," suggested Zenobia.

"My dear, we shall need all that money in time to come, to buy boots and clothing, and other absolute necesaries of life. No, darling, I shall make over all my good, old things, and have only one gown, a white silk and a white tulle veil, just like your bridal costume, to be married in."

"Like mine!" exclaimed Zenobia, who had not even reflected where her wedding dress was to come from.

"Of course, like yours. Uncle says we are to be dressed the same, and his word is law in this house, as I do wish it were all over the country."

"But I have no white silk dress," said Zenobia.

"Neither have I. But uncle will see to that, and we must not oppose his will if he insists on giving one to each of us."

"Oh, no; never! never!" exclaimed Zenobia, whose pride, though derived from the Cid, could never have risen in rebellion against one whom she loved and revered, as she did her benefactor.

"And, darling," continued Jemima, "do you know that you have treasures of laces, satins, velvets, India shawls and everything else in those huge trunks up in the garret, which were left to you by Mrs. Horah? She showed them to me on one occasion. It was not only her bridal outfit, but articles of splendid costume she had purchased when abroad. Poor darling! She was widowed a few months after her wedding, and never wore anything but black to the day of her death. And such jewels! Such diamonds! pearls! rubies! Oh, I never saw their equals!"

"She gave all her clothes to her colored people, I

thought, except a few shawls, velvets and laces," said Zenobia.

"She gave her common clothing and all her home gowns to them, but the magnificent costumes and jewels that fill those eight big trunks would have been thrown away on the colored people."

"I had forgotten the trunks. I have not thought of them since they were carried up into the garret," said Zenobia.

"Well, you must think of them now, and select a few satins and velvets for us to rip up and make over again for you. Oh! won't you be fine when you got to Richmond?"

"Dear Jemima, you must share with me. You must, indeed," said Zenobia. "I could not enjoy anything I possess if you did not share it, dearest darling."

While this affectionate conversation was going on upstairs between the two girls, Col. Pryor was in his study, reading the Washington *National Intelligencer* of the day before, which reached him that morning. Suddenly he heard the approach of wheels up the drive.

Looking out of the window, he saw the carryall driven by Marman, whom he immediately recognized, and containing three other men, all well known to him.

"Ah! just as I thought," he said, breaking into a hearty fit of laughter. "He comes, backed by the law, to seize his prey! Now we shall have some fun!"

Meanwhile Marman had drawn up before the house, alighted, and knocked at the door.

Tim, who was arranging the parlor, heard the summons, and hastened to open the door.

"Tell your master that I must see him directly," said Marman, in a peremptory tone, as he stroke uninvited into the hall, driving whip in hand.

"Yes, sah. Like ter see de dogs, too?" inquired Tim, with a grin.

Marman struck at him with the whip, but Tim dexterously dodged the blow, and retreated into his master's study, where he said:

"Marse Nat, sah, dere's dat dere low nigger-buyer, an' free mo' po' w'ite trash, come arter yer, sah. Mus' I loose de dogs?"

"No, Tim, I must see these gentlemen," replied the colonel, rising and going to the hall, where Marman stood, cracking his whip, with the three men, who had alighted and entered the house, standing close behind him.

"Good-morning, gentlemen. What can I do for you?" politely, if a little ironically, inquired the affable colonel.

"I have come for my slave! And I order you to produce her!" rudely exclaimed the ruffianly trader.

"There is no slave of yours in the house, nor ever has been," replied Col. Pryor, coolly.

"You lie!" exclaimed the trader.

"Marse! Marse! Lebe me loose dem dogs! Tige's 'covered ob hissef! An' he's fastin', and dat sharp!" pleaded Tim.

Marman raised his whip, and it would have descended with disastrous force across Tim's face had not Col. Pryor snatched it as it fell, and hurled it over the trader's head onto the lawn.

"Mind yourself, fellow, or I shall give you in charge here for assault!" he exclaimed, looking the ruffian straight in the face, so that the creature quailed under the blue lightning of his eyes.

"Give me my slave! That is all I want, and, d—— me, that is what I mean to have!" fiercely cried the trader.

"To whom do you allude? Whom do you claim on these premises as your slave?" coolly inquired the colonel, who was growing disgusted with the scene, and wished to shorten it.

"You know as well as I do. I mean, if you must hear me say so, that yellow wench, Servia, who dared to slam the door in my face when I came after her the other day. Oh! but she shall smart for it yet!"

Col Pryor smiled.

"Are you going to give me my nigger, or not?" firecely demanded Marman.

"Not!" quietly returned the colonel.

"Then I'm determined to take her by force! Officer, do your duty!" cried Marman.

"Come, Col. Pryor! Come, my dear sir," pleaded the constable. "A gentleman of your rank and position would surely never resist the law."

"Of course not," laughed the colonel.

"Then why don't you give me the girl, and have done with it, blast you!" furiously demanded the trader, gnashing his teeth. "Will you do so, or not?"

"Not!" again replied the colonel, with a laugh that nearly maddened his antagonist.

"Officer, do your duty," he exclaimed, stamping furiously.

"Oh, come! come! Col. Pryor, my dear sir. You are aware that even you cannot resist the law. Be persuaded, sir, and produce the girl and let us go," pleaded the distressed constable.

"My good Bean," said the colonel, laughing, "I assure you I am not resisting the law. You should know me well enough as a law-abiding citizen."

"I am sure I always thought so, sir," said the constable.

"What does all this mean?" frantically demanded Marman, who seemed to fear that his rights were in danger.

"If you persuade that man to keep the peace, constable, I will explain to your satisfaction," said Col. Pryor.

"Do be decent, Mr.—a—a—what's your name? You

will get justice," said the officer of the law, persuasively.

"Durned if I don't have it, too," growled the trader, like a wild beast.

"Now, Bean, will you look over this document?" asked the colonel, as he drew from his pocket a long, folded parchment, and placed it in the hands of the constable.

That officer unfolded the document and read it carefully. Then he returned it to the colonel, and, looking with a queer expression at the trader, said:

"Well, Mr. Marman, I reckon you and we had just as well turn around and go home."

"What do you mean?" demanded Marman, changing color.

"Why, that you have been handsomely fooled, sir."

"What do you mean, I say?" cried the trader, stamping furiously.

"Why, when Mr. Horah sold that girl to you he had no more right to sell her than he had to sell me."

"Why hadn't he?" demanded Marman, turning pale.

"Because her mistress, the late Mrs. Horah, before she died, set the girl, Servia, free. That document Col. Pryor showed me, was her deed of manumission, duly executed—witnessed, signed and sealed."

Marman did not pretend to dispute the fact, but he fell into such a fearful fit of cursing and swearing that Col. Pryor addressed himself to the constable, and said:

"Officer Bean, I call no you to enforce the peace. Get this man away as quietly as possible, and excuse me if I leave you."

With these words, the colonel turned and reëntered his study.

"Marster! Oh! marster! marster! shall I loose dem dogs?" cried Tim, in an imploring voice.

"No, you blockhead! Come in here!" commanded the colonel, laughing heartily.

"Come, Mr. Marman, let us go. You can do nothing," declared the constable.

"Yes, I can do something, and I will, too! I can wring Murdok Horah's neck!" furiously retorted the trader, foaming and stamping, as he entered the carry-all, followed by his companions, and drove off.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MURDOK HORAH CLAIMS HIS WARD.

When anger rushes, unrestrained, to action,
Like a hot steed, it stumbles on its way.—SAVAGE.

Marman, as his companions afterward described his state of mind, was fairly "boiling over with rage." He cursed Col. Pryor, Murdok Horah, Servia, the whole country and everybody in it, and himself deepest of all, for ever having set foot on the land.

When he had delivered himself of much profanity, to which his companions made no reply, he suddenly turned to the constable, and demanded:

"Did you ever see such an infernal fraud as this?"

"There wasn't no fraud, sir, that I can see. It was queer, though. Why, that deed of manumission was dated several months before the late Mrs. Horah's death. But why it was not made public afterward beats me, 'specially as everybody round here was a'wondering why she left all her other niggers free, and left a bridge over the nose of this here girl, which was her prime favorite, as was well known to the whole place. I don't understand it, for my part," thoughtfully remarked Mr. Bean.

"I reckon your Col. Corncobs wanted to defraud the girl of her liberty, and keep her for himself, so he

suppressed the deed and would never have produced it but that he would rather the girl should be free than the property of Mr. Horah or myself," said Marman with an ugly sneer.

"No, sir!" promptly and somewhat indignantly answered the constable. "The colonel never would have done anything dishonorable. Never, sir!"

"Then, why couldn't the old cuss have told me yesterday, when I went for the girl, that she was free?" curtly demanded the trader.

"Oh, I don't know that I can answer that. But they do say that the colonel doesn't favor gentlemen of your calling. In fact, he has no use for 'em, anyway. So, sir, he was bent on not giving you any satisfaction until he was compelled to do it by the law."

"Curse him! If I could only get a hold on him, I'd make him smart. And as for Horah——"

"Oh, well now, sir, Mr. Horah—well, he ain't liked in this here neighborhood; but I really don't see how he's to blame for what has happened. He couldn't have known, any more than the rest of us, that the girl had been set free," argued the constable.

Marman knew this, so his wrath toward Murdok Horah, whom he certainly would have prosecuted if he could possibly have found legal grounds for doing so, subsided, or, rather, took another direction. In this mollified mood he reached Mistyrock.

He drove his companions first to the Washington House, where he satisfied their claims for their time and trouble, and treated them all around—all at Murdok Horah's expense. He did not drink with them, but he spent half an hour for rest and refreshment for himself and horse, and then took leave of his companions, and started for Horah Hall, feeling some satisfaction in the anticipation of the fury into which Horah would be roused by the news he had to tell, and in the reflection that Horah would be obliged to sell

Celia to him to satisfy his debt, and provide himself with ready money.

It was near sunset on that short winter day when he reached Horah Hall. He alighted, tied his horse and knocked at the door.

Celia promptly opened it to him.

"How is your master?" he inquired.

"He is better, sir. You will find him in the oak parlor," answered the woman, politely, as she bowed and passed him, and went to take the horse and carry-all to the stable.

Marman looked after her with the eyes of a very well pleased proprietor for a moment, and then he turned and entered the house and went to the back parlor, where he found Murdok Horah pacing the floor in a very bad humor.

"Well, have you brought the girl? Where is she? Bring her right in here immediately. I want to have some talk with her. I have some questions to put to her," he exclaimed, pausing in his impatient walk and dropping into his big armchair.

"I have not brought the girl," said Marman.

Horah started and stared at him.

"She is still at The Notches," continued Marman.

"What!" cried Horah.

"And if you wish to see her, and put questions to her, you will have to go there and ask permission of Col. Pryor," concluded the trader, throwing himself wearily into a second armchair.

"Look here, Marman!" exclaimed Horah, with a dark frown. "I never liked conundrums, and never less than now. Explain youself."

"Well, sir," said Marman, who even in his own disappointment was enjoying the discomfiture of Horah, "when I went to The Notches this morning, fortified by that very carefully and legally executed bill of sale,

and supported by the presence of the officers of the law——"

"Will you get on, confound you, without so much preamble?" roared Horah.

"And fully expecting to triumph over old Corncobs, and carry off the girl when I produced my document, and pointed to my escort——"

"Go on, blast you!" bellowed Horah.

"Imagine my amazement when I was met with a deed of manumission of the mulatto slave, Servia, executed by Isabel Horah!"

"The devil!" shouted Horah, with rising fury.

"Yes," exclaimed Marman, who enjoyed the scene, "all regularly signed, witnessed and sealed. The constable and myself examined it together, and found it quite correct, and unassailable," concluded Marman.

Murdok Horah sprang from his chair, and he began storming up and down the floor, blaspheming and gesticulating like a demon, and calling down maledictions on the heads of everybody concerned.

Meanwhile Marman lit a cigar and began to quietly smoke. Horah raged himself into a state of exhaustion, and once more dropped into his chair.

"Look here, Marman, I am going to contest these documents! May I be eternally condemned if I don't. I haven't seen one of them. I know nothing but hearsay. And d—— it, I won't be bound by them. I am told that my mother left some half dozen slaves free by her will, and made that old fraud, Pryor, sole executor. I have never seen that will. I am told that she freed the wench Servia by a deed of manumission, dated some time before her death, but I have never seen that deed. Why, I have not even seen the inside of her writing desk or secretary. When I went to make some examination of her papers this morning, I found everything locked and sealed, except the lower drawer of the old secretary, which contained nothing but some writing

materials and waste paper. Celia tells me that old Pryor locked them all up, set his seal upon them, and took away the keys. Now, I shall go to The Notches to-morrow morning and demand my keys, my mother's will, a sight of that deed of manumission, which I believe to be a forgery, and the custody of my legal ward, Zenobia de Leon; and last, but not least, a full explanation of Pryor's mismanagement of my estate during my absence. Now there shall be no more trifling. The old fraud shall find out that he has me to deal with!" exclaimed Horah, pacing the floor in his excitement.

"Which will make a great difference, no doubt," said Marman, dryly. "Especially as you will find that you will have him to deal with," he said to himself.

"And by the way, Marman," said Horah, reseating himself, and lying back in a lordly manner, "did you hear anything about my runaway niggers in the village? This is the third day of their flight, curse them! They ought to be pretty well starved and frozen and worn out by this time! Why don't you speak, man?" impatiently demanded Horah.

"So I will, as soon as you give me a chance. I heard nothing satisfactory about them, though their sudden flight and disappearance was still the talk and wonder of the whole village. People say it seems as if the earth had opened and swallowed the whole gang!"

"When I get hold of the infernal scoundrels I will make them wish the earth had swallowed them!" cried Horah, with a terrible anathema.

"You'll kill them, of course," replied Marman.

"I'll do worse, sir! I'll make them pray for death!" cried the savage.

The entrance of Celia to set the table for supper put an end to the confidential conversation between the two men for the time being.

Not until the meal was finished, the table cleared,

the room restored to order, and the two worthies were again alone, was the discussion renewed; but it was in another key.

Both men were quietly smoking.

"Well, Mr. Horah," Marman began, "you must admit that you have brought me down here on a fool's errand. Not only have I failed to buy a single nigger, but I have had a rough time besides. Twice been put in jeopardy of my life."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" coarsely demanded Horah, removing the cigar from his lips, and blowing off a great cloud of smoke.

"Not to hold you responsible for anything that has gone wrong, of course," said Marman.

"Oh, thank you ever so much," exclaimed Horah, with a rude laugh.

"No," said Marman, keeping his temper, for he had an object to gain. "Because you have been a greater loser than myself by all this."

"Yes, by all the fiends in flames, I have! But let me get those beasts in my hands, only once!" exclaimed Horah, with a fierce stamp and a dark scowl, that threatened more than his words.

Marman gave him time to let this blast of bad temper blow itself out, and when the brute was once more serenely smoking, said:

"I wish to remind you, Mr. Horah, that you have one servant, for whom I expressed a wish, and offered you a very handsome price."

"And I said she was not for sale!" grumpily replied Horah.

"Not for the price I offered; but you intimated, or at least I thought you did, that you might let her go for a cool thousand dollars, cash down. Come, sir, I will give you that price, cash down on the nail," said Marman, with an air of magnanimity.

Murdok Horah hesitated for a few moments, during

which he looked gloomily on the floor. Then, with a sudden change of manner, he raised his head, brought down his first upon the table with a thump that shook the room, and cried:

"Done! I am tired to death with all this infernal bother! You shall have the woman for that money down. We will go to Mistyrock to-morrow and get the business over at once. Then we will call at The Notches on our return, settle up affairs there, and then return here. And when you have taken the woman away, I shall shut up this cursed old barn and put it into the hands of an agent, for sale or rent, and go and take a room at the Washington House for myself and ward, Zenobia, and stay there until my black chattels are caught and sent to perdition, where they belong. Then, ho, for Paris, with my pretty ward! Ho, for Paris! the only city worth living in. The only city in the world," concluded Horah, with a flourish of his hand in the air.

"A very pretty program—if it can be carried out," thought Marman, but he said nothing.

"And now I reckon it's bedtime," concluded Horah, rising and stretching himself with a great yawn.

They then separated and retired.

They both rose early the next morning and met on they way downstairs. A grumpy "good-morning!" from each was all that passed between them until they entered the oak parlor, where they found a fine fire, an appetizing breakfast and the morning sun shining in at the windows.

Celia was in attendance. She courtesied, and placed two chairs at the table. They sat down, and she served them with her usual polite attention.

Murdok Horah's heart was hard enough, yet as he looked at the woman who had been his tender nurse and foster mother in infancy and childhood; his loving friend and devoted servant always, to whom he

had been accustomed to carry all his troubles, feeling certain of her sympathy and assistance; who had remained alone at her post in the desolate house when all the other servants had forsaken it—yes, and let the truth be told, whom he had always loved only, of all the world—when he looked at this woman, and remembered all that she had been to him, and all she was now, and reflected that he was about to sell her for money, as he would sell a horse or a cow, his callous bosom felt a pain as new as it was strange. It startled and angered him. It was but momentarily, for he threw it off with an irritable:

"Bah! What rot!"

"What are you talking about?" inquired Marman. looking up in surprise from his plate.

"None of your business!" rudely replied Horah. Then, turning abruptly to the woman, he said:

"Celia, go at once to the stable, and put the bay horse to the carryall, and have it at the door by the time Mr. Marman and myself finish breakfast."

Celia bent her head, and went on her errand. Horah, glad to be rid of her unconsciously reproachful presence, addressed himself, with his usual gluttony, to his coffee, buckwheat cakes and fried ham.

Half an hour later, the two men were seated in the carryall and on their way to Mistyrock.

When they reached the village, their first business was to order fresh posters to be written out in a bold hand—for there was no printing office in the little place—and put up in the post office, in the barroom of the hotel and in the blacksmith shop, and in all other places of frequent resort in the vicinity. Next, they drove to the office of the notary, where Murdok Horah executed a bill of sale of his quadroon slave woman, Celia, to Jasper Marman; and where he received the trader's check for one thousand dollars, minus the sum already advanced by the latter.

Finally, they took drinks at the hotel bar, where Horah settled his bill, and then they joyously reëntered the carryall and drove toward The Notches, in full anticipation of having a "good time."

When they reached the house, they both alighted, tied the horse to the rack and walked up to the entrance. They found the door ajar, and Tim engaged in sweeping off the front porch.

"Where's your master, nigger?" sharply demanded Marman, who hated Tim on account of the dogs.

"W'at?" exclaimed the darky, pausing in his work and resting his chin on the top of his broom handle, "w'at, ain't yer got 'nouf ob my ole marse yet? Lor'! de foolishness ob some w'ite men!"

Murdok Horah started toward him with a fierce oath and with an upraised whip, that must have descended with dire disaster across the black man's face and eyes, had not Tim, with a burst of derisive laughter, adroitly sprung aside, letting the sharp stroke fall upon the shoulders of Marman, who stood near him.

"Look here! Confound you, Horah! What are you about?" angrily demanded the trader.

Murdok Horah growled some reply that was more profane than apologetic.

At this moment Col. Pryor came out of the house and saluted the visitors. There was often a conflict between politeness and sincerity in the mind of this good man, which on this occasion he felt and tried to compromise.

"How do you do, Mr. Marman? So I see you are back again, Mr. Horah. How are you, sir?" he inquired. He could not say that he was glad to see them, for he was not. He could not say that he hoped to find them well, for he did not.

Marman only bowed in response, but Horah coarsely replied:

"Yes, sir; I have come back to call you to an account

for your maladministration of the estate with which you have been intrusted."

Col. Pryor looked the speaker over from head to foot, and thought that he had never, in all his life, seen a white man look so much like a beastly savage, and he wondered, not for the first time, how such a creature could possibly be the son of the fair, refined and beautiful Isabel Horah.

"I am ready," he said, slowly, "to meet you in court or anywhere else, and lay the whole matter open before the world. Will you walk in, gentlemen?" he asked, with some hesitation before the last word.

He led them into his study and gave them seats, and took one himself.

"Proceed, Mr. Horah," he said.

"First, I want a sight of that alleged deed of manumission," said Horah, rudely.

"You refer to the deed executed by the late Mrs. Isabel Horah, in favor of her servant Servia?"

"Of course. You know that as well as I do."

Col. Pryor arose and went to his writing desk and took from it a folded document, which he brought and placed in the hands of Horah, saying:

"This, sir, is an attested copy. The original is not in my possession."

"Copy!" snarled Horah, as he unfolded the paper. "Was this what you showed the constable yesterday?"

"No, sir; I showed him the original deed."

"Where is that?"

"In safe-keeping," quietly replied Col. Pryor.

"I must see it!" said Horah, as he passed the copy to Marman.

"You cannot, sir," the colonel replied, with firmness.

"It is not necessary. This is a certified copy, and would hold good in law, even if the original was destroyed. Do not make any trouble," urged the trader,

who was disgusted with the idiotic ill manners of his companion.

"Then hand me over my mother's last will!" demanded Horah.

Col. Pryor went back to his writing desk, and took from it an envelope parchment, which he brought and gave into the hands of Horah, explaining:

"This, also, is an attested copy."

"It seems to me that I am to see nothing but copies. I shall not be satisfied with copies, I assure you, Col. Pryor."

"The original document is in the charge of Mr. Clement Kent, the family solicitor. You can see it at his office," quietly replied the colonel.

"Now, give me my keys. I don't know why you ever took the liberty of carrying them off."

Col. Pryor gravely detached the bunch from the hook on which it was hanging, and passed it over to the owner. He declined to notice his rudeness in any manner, even by a smile. The ruffian was too low even for contempt.

"Is there anything else I can do for you, Mr. Horah?" inquired the colonel, rising as if to intimate that the interview was at an end.

"Oh, yes! The most important matter yet—to which wills, and deeds, and keys are trifles! I must see my pretty ward, Zenobia, immediately. 'Business before pleasure,' you know; but now we've got through with the first, I should like to enjoy the last," said Horah, with a jaunty air.

Col. Pryor, who knew the girl's horror of Murdok Horah, replied gravely:

"Miss de Leon is particularly engaged. You cannot see her."

"Engaged, is she? Engaged or not, she must come down to see me. Since my mother's death I am her legal, as well as her natural, guardian. I claim her

as my lawful ward. And I positively insist upon seeing her," exclaimed Horah.

"And I have said you cannot! And, now, I say, once for all, you shall not see her! No more words need be spoken," said Col. Pryor, so firmly that, had not the claimant been an utter fool, he must have seen that nothing could move that man from a stand he had once taken.

But, oh! just at this unlucky moment, the pleasant sounds of Zenobia's voice and step were heard without, and she, ignorant that her uncle had visitors—and such visitors!—came singing and dancing into the room, exclaiming:

"Uncle, dear, will you give me a stamp?" Then she stopped suddenly, in dismay for an instant, and would have turned and fled, but Murdok Horah sprang between her and the door, exclaiming in a tone of triumph:

"Why, here she is! My pretty little darling! Come and kiss me, my beauty!" And he would have caught her in his arms had she not, with a low cry of intense horror, sprung to the bosom of Col. Pryor and clung there, as a terrified child would cling to its father. Col. Pryor passed both arms around her, and gathered her closer to that shelter, while, frowning darkly on the offender, he exclaimed:

"Sit down, Mr. Horah!"

"Not until I have had a kiss from my pretty little rebel, there!" chuckled Horah.

Zenobia shuddered throughout all her frame, and clung closer to her protector.

"Leave the house, sir!" cried the colonel, now thoroughly aroused, and pressing the girl more closely to his sheltering bosom.

"Not without my pretty ward! Not at your bidding, old rooster! Cock-a-doodle-do!" crowed Horah, with insulting defiance.

"Tim!" shouted the colonel, at the top of his voice.

The negro came running into the room with delighted alacrity, exclaiming:

"Dogs, mars'er? Dogs? Yes, sah! Yes, sah! An' dey ain' had no dinner yet, neider!"

"No! no! No dogs yet, Tim. But hurry off and get three of your strongest companions and fetch them here to put that brute out of the house," said the colonel, pointing to Murdok Horah.

"Yes, mars'er! Yes, sah! Oh, dey'll git der fill ob my ole marse yet. I tell yer all so! But I wish it wer' de dogs. An' dey's had no dinner yet, po', dum' fings," mumbled Tim, as he hastened away joyfully to do his errand.

"Come, Mr. Horah, you are really disgracing yourself. Come away, for decency's sake," said Marman.

If he had said for dear life and limb, he would have more truly expressed his feelings on the subject, for Marman cared very little for decency, and very much for a whole skin; and he remembered Tim and the dogs, and did not feel quite sure that the "black devil," as he mentally called him, might not let them loose on his own responsibility.

"Come, sir," he continued, seeing that Horah still hesitated, and glared around the room with the fiery eyes and drawn lips of a tiger at bay. "Come, sir. You have got all you came for except the young lady. If she is your ward, the law will give her into your custody, and you can eventually take her, and no one can prevent you. But you can never take her by force. Be persuaded."

"I'll—I'll—I'll fix you! You obstinate cur!" panted the defeated villain, shaking his fists at the colonel, and following up his threat with a volley of blasphemy that compelled even the seasoned slave trader to cry shame upon him.

However, through all his raging, he perceived the

necessity of going at once, to avoid an ignominious ejection by the hands of Col. Pryor's servants. So he permitted Marman to lead him from the room.

But no sooner were they out of the study than they hurried from the house with undignified haste, jumped into the carryall, and drove off at full speed. And not too soon, as a crowd of stalwart negroes came running onto the lawn, and, as the vehicle passed, raised a derisive shout after them.

When the study was relieved of their baleful presence, Col. Pryor placed Zenobia in a large easy-chair, saying:

"Come yourself, my dear child. The brute has gone. Why, how you still tremble! Calm yourself. You are perfectly safe. You never were in the slightest danger in this house, and in my presence. Could you have feared that you were?"

"Oh! no, no! dear uncle. Please forgive me for being so foolish. And yet—and yet—oh, that man is so quick and dreadful in his movements. Oh, sir, you don't know. You can't know how much cause I have to fear and loathe him!" she said, with a shudder that shook her whole frame.

"I do know it, my love. I know it all. Jemima has told me of his brutal misbehavior to you, even in her presence, and in that of his mother. But, my dear, I tell you this: That before that beast should have put his claws upon you, I would have laid him—no, not dead, for I heed my Maker's laws—but helpless at your feet! See that pistol on the bracket there? It was in reach of my hand while your little head lay upon my breast. If he had advanced one step nearer to you I would have sent a bullet through him, not to kill, but to disable him. Now go to your room and lie down, and let Jemima attend to you. You need her ministrations now," said the colonel, laying his hand upon her head as in benediction.

She took that hand and bowed her forehead upon it, pressed it to her lips and to her heart, and then turned and left the room.

She did not go to Jemima's, but to her own chamber. Her whole soul was possessed of a dread, disgust and abhorrence of Murdok Horah, of which no words could give an adequate idea.

She threw herself into her armchair, covered her face with her hands, and sat brooding for some moments, then started up and paced the floor with swift, silent footsteps, then flung herself upon her bed and rolled as one in pain. What was she afraid of? She, herself, could not have answered more definitely than by saying "Murdok Horah!" And of him it was not only fear, but loathing, terror, horror.

At length she arose and went to her bureau and removed from its upper drawer a small morocco case, from which she took a beautiful little pistol of wonderful precision of aim and action, which, on the previous summer, she had won as a prize at a rural shooting match, in which Godfrey, Jemima, Oliver and herself were competitors. She examined the weapon carefully, saw that it was in perfect order for instant defense if required, then replaced it in its little case, and put it in the bosom of her dress, saying:

"Now I feel safe. In the name of the Virgin, I will never be without this defense by day or night."

And with this resolution the long-descended daughter of the Cid recovered her hereditary courage.

CHAPTER XIX.

MURDOK HORAH'S MADNESS.

"She is my ward. I am her legal, as well as her natural, guardian, and by the Eternal, I will have her!" exclaimed Murdok Horah, as he was driven swiftly along the road from The Notches to his ancestral home.

Marman had taken the reins, and whipped the horse to his utmost speed, often turning his head, looking behind and listening intently, in fear of hearing Tim's hounds baying behind him. He could not place any reliance in that nigger, he said to himself.

"Why don't you speak to me?" coarsely demanded the ruffian.

The horse was flying, the way was rugged, and the driver had his head turned backward, in anxious watching and listening.

"Can't you speak to me?" cried Horah.

"I can't attend to your nonsense, and the horse, and the road, and our safety, all at the same time," retorted Marman.

"H'm!" growled Horah, and he gathered up the rugs about his knees, for the night was bitterly cold. Even Marman's hands were almost numb as he held the reins. As he placed more and more distance between Tim's hounds and his own person, he slackened speed, and took things easily.

As they drew near Horah Hall, they saw the front windows ruddy with lamplight and fire, that shone through the crimson curtains out upon the snow-covered ground, with cheerful glow that transformed the grim old place into picturesque beauty.

"Celia's forethought," said Marman to himself, "to welcome us home on this bitterly cold night, with lighted windows. How devoted that woman is to that

master of hers—who, by the way, is no longer her master, thanks be to fortune. Now, if she can turn all that disinterested devotion to me, I will repay her much better than this young brute. I will be kind to her, and show her that I can appreciate a good servant when I find one. And she is one of the very best. I like her a thousand times better than I do that impudent wench Servia, let Horah say what he likes. Yes, I have made an excellent bargain," concluded the trader, as he drew the horse up before the house.

Celia must have been on the lookout, and heard the approach of the carryall, for, as soon as it stopped, she came out, wrapped up in a large shawl, to receive her master and take the horse and vehicle to the stable. She brought in her hand a bucket, which she sat upon the ground.

From the open front door streamed a warm glow of welcoming light.

"How infernally cold it is. My feet are like clods! Celia!" exclaimed Horah, as he got out of the carryall, followed by Marman.

"Yes, sir," responded the woman.

"When you take that horse to the stable, see that you give him a good rubbing down, and then throw a blanket over him, and give him a hot mash with a gill of rum in it."

"Yes, sir, I have it all ready," she answered, as she lifted the steaming bucket from the ground and placed it in the carryall. Then she climbed into the driver's seat and drove off toward the stable.

The two worthies entered the house, and, without stopping to take off their overcoats, went straight to the oak parlor, where they found an enormous hickorywood fire in the broad fireplace, and on the ample hearth, within the fender, covered dishes and a coffeepot, all emitting fragrant and savory odors.

"More forethought of that excellent Celia, to keep

these things before this roasting fire, waiting for us on this cold night," said Marman to himself.

The two men drew off their outer garments, threw them on the sofa, and then seated themselves in the large cushioned armchairs in the chimney corners, opposite each other.

In a shorter time than she might have been expected, Celia returned to the house, and came into the room to place supper on the table.

The men had not had what they called "a square meal" since breakfast, so they devoured all the food and drink placed before them, and soon cleared the platters.

When supper was over, and the service taken away, Horah ordered the kettle of boiling water to be left on the hearth, and brandy, lemons and sugar to be brought, and, with glasses, to be placed on the table.

When this was done, he turned gloomily to Celia, who lingered in the room, in case anything else should be required of her, and sulkily demanded:

"What are you loitering here for? Go to bed!"

Celia went out.

The fact was that, since he had sold the woman, he could not bear the sight of her. Her presence pricked his conscience, and made him angry—not with himself, the guilty one—but with her, who was ignorant of any offense or cause of offense.

When the men were left alone they drew their chairs nearer together between the table and the fire, and each mixed his punch to his own mind, and they prepared to spend the winter evening drinking and smoking.

Murdok Horah had in his pocket the unread copy of his mother's will and the keys of her secretary, containing her papers. But he felt no disposition to examine them that night. He hated business at all times, and just now he felt more indolent and self-indulgent

than usual. And if he thought at all upon the subject, as he lay back in his easy-chair, with his feet on the mantel, he concluded that he could learn nothing new by poking through wills and papers. His mother had freed all her own "niggers," and there was no help for it. But Horah Hall, all its dependencies, and about thirty valuable negroes, were his by inheritance from his father. No one disputed or could dispute that. So the will and the papers could wait until morning. Besides, the subject was driven from his mind by the thought of Zenobia.

"By Jupiter, Marman," he suddenly burst forth, after he had quaffed several tumblers of strong punch and lay back in his chair with his eyes dreamily closed, "she is the most beautiful creature I ever saw in the whole course of my life. Why, look here! In all my travels in this country and through Europe—yes, even in Paris—I never met so beautiful a creature. The idea that here, in this musty old manor house, among the mountain solitudes of Virginia, such a girl should have grown up, is a wonder to me. And do you think I am going to let that old fraud, Nat Pryor, keep her? Not much!" he cried, as took up his jug of punch from the hearth and filled his tumbler to the brim.

"Well, the girl is certainly very beautiful. But, you see, she is not for you, my excellent friend. So, if I were you, I would not bother about her," remarked Marman, whose unusual libations of hot punch—for which he excused himself on account of the cold night—had inspired with that frankness of speech, and fearlessness of action, commonly called "Dutch courage."

"Not for me?" Why is she not for me?" fiercely demanded Horah, following up his question with a torrent of profanity.

"As I had the honor of remarking once before, you cannot take her by force, and I doubt very much whether you can get her by law. If the case should

come up before the court, the choice of guardian will be left to the girl herself. And, my dear fellow, not to wound your vanity, I think the young lady has shown a marked preference for Corncobs over yourself. In fact, I think she has the bad taste to regard you with fear and disgust," said Marman, with a tipsy laugh.

"Shut up! you blasted nigger peddler!" shouted Horah. "Don't you know that opposition to my will only adds fuel to the fire? I will have that girl, in spite of all the infernal fiends!"

"With their help, you should say," corrected Marman. And he took up a candle from the mantel, lighted it, and said:

"I think I will go to bed, Mr. Horah. Good-night," and left the room.

Murdok Horah growled some surly response, and drank as long as the ingredients for replenishing his jug lasted. Then he reeled off to bed.

He did not fall into a stupid sleep, as usual after a drinking bout, but rolled, tossed and tumbled in a fever of excitement. The image of Zenobia pursued, possessed and inflamed him like fire. He saw again, in fevered fancy, the glowing vision of womanly loveliness that had appeared before his eyes for a few brief moments in Col. Pryor's study. Every detail of that perfect beauty was present to his mind's eye, distracting him—the graceful form, the stately little head, covered with its fine, glossy, rippling, black hair, that curled around the broad, low, smooth forehead; the pure, delicate, refined features; clear, dark complexion, flushing in the oval cheeks, and perfect lips of vivid crimson. It was that very darkness and richness of complexion, combined with classic perfection of features, that constituted her rare style of beauty. But the glory of her lovely countenance consisted in the eyes—large, dark, luminous, full of fire or softness, as they could blaze with anger, dissolve with compas-

sion, or glow with love, as her mood varied. Her face, form and her whole gracious presence seemed an ideal of womanly tenderness, of human love in its pure, essential, unselfish perfection. Her eyes, her face, the whole expression of her presence, seemed to say, "I want to do something for you," or to question, "How can I serve you?"

Murdok Horah did not appreciate, because he could not recognize, the fineness of this young girl's spirit; but he had conceived a selfish, desperate, diabolical passion for her, and he deeply swore that he would possess her, in spite of all the powers of earth, no matter whose rights he overrode, whose heart he broke, or whose life he wrecked.

It may seem strange that after the "strained relations" under which the two men had parted on the previous night, they should meet in the morning as if nothing unpleasant had passed between them; but it was their mutual interest to be on civil terms with each other, and they preferred to be politic rather than dignified.

They met at breakfast with the usual morning salutations. Then Marman said:

"I intended to be up this morning in time to take the first train, but I overslept myself. I shall go by the noon train."

"Then you will have to leave here by ten o'clock," responded Horah.

"Have you told the girl that you have sold her to me?" inquired Marman, in a low tone, for Celia was in the room, though not very near the table.

"No. You must tell her yourself when I am out of the way," growled Horah.

"Coward!" muttered Marman, under his breath.

When breakfast was over they lighted cigars and sat down to smoke.

Horah drew from his pocket the copy of his mother's

will and began to read it in silence. Suddenly he started up in a furious passion, tore it into fragments with teeth and nails, flung them into the fire, and began stamping up and down the floor like a maddened wild beast.

"What is the matter now? You are not drunk!" exclaimed Marman, staring at the demoniac.

But, without replying, Horah stormed up and down the floor, gesticulating madly, and breaking into a fearful volley of profanity, as was his manner when his evil passions were aroused.

Marman spoke no more, but smoked on, and gave the maniac time to recover. At length Horah flung himself down into his chair, clutched its arms with his fingers, as if they were something he wished to strangle, and, with his black-bearded mouth drawn tiger-like from his gleaming, white teeth, and with eyes red and fierce, stared into the fire. Presently he began to stamp with both his heavy feet upon the hearth, as if he would pound the stone to powder.

Still Marman refrained from interrupting him.

At length Horah burst forth:

"You want to know what's the matter? Everything's the matter! In her mean, fraudulent, infernal will! She has not only left all her niggers free, but all her jewels—a fortune in themselves—to Zenobia; and, worse than all, left that old fraud, Pryor, the trustee of the girl's property and the guardian of her person. Oh-h-h-h!" roared the infuriated madman, starting up again and beginning to rage about the room.

"Beaten," murmured the trader.

When Horah once more flung himself into his chair, Marman drew out his watch and said:

"It's nine o'clock. You or I should warn Celia to pack up."

"Warn her yourself!" cried Horah.

"Where shall I find her?" coolly inquired Marman.

"Ring for her! She won't fail to answer the bell. Tell her that I am out if she wants to see me," said Horah. And he left the parlor.

In a few minutes Celia entered. She looked around the room, expecting to see her master, and then turning her dark eyes on Marman, she softly inquired:

"Was it you who rang for me, sir?"

"Yes, my good girl, it was I," said Marman; and then he paused so long that Celia asked:

"Is there anything I can do for you, sir?"

"Yes; but don't stand—you have been on your feet all the morning. Take that chair and sit down while I talk to you," said the trader, meaning to be very kind, and to make a favorable impression on the woman.

"Thank you, sir, but I would rather stand if you will let me," replied the woman, quietly folding her arms and assuming an attentive air.

"How old are you, Celia?" he inquired, still very kindly.

"I was thirty-seven on the first day of last January, sir?"

"Ever been married?"

"Was married at fifteen years of age, sir."

"Where is your husband?"

"He died within a year after our marriage."

"What was the matter with him?" inquired Marman, more to make the woman talk than for any interest he felt in the subject.

"He was shot dead by his master, sir," replied the woman, as unwonted tears rushed to her eyes.

"Good God!" cried Marman, horrified at the news, slave trader as he was. "For what fault or crime?" he inquired.

"The unpardonable one of wanting to keep his young wife to himself."

"Heaven and earth! Was it the late Mr. Horah?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was nothing done about it?"

"Nothing, sir. There was no evidence against him. I was the only witness of the deed, and, being a slave, was not a competent witness against my—owner," replied the woman, bitterly.

"Well, he got his deserts, if not from the law, certainly from fate. He was shot dead himself in a drunken brawl about twenty years ago, I have heard."

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any children, Celia?" he next inquired.

She paused for a few moments, but as he seemed waiting for an answer, she at length slowly replied:

"I had one child, born a few days after my husband's death; but I lost him before he was a year old."

"Poor woman! And you never married again?"

"No, sir."

"Nor had any more children?"

"Of course not, sir," said the woman, her dark cheeks flushing redly.

"And you have no near kin hereabouts that you care much for, I hope?"

"No, sir," answered the woman, wondering at the question.

"I am glad to hear it, for your own sake."

Celia looked up in surprise, not knowing what to make of his words.

"And I should think you would not care very much for this place, or for the Horahs. Indeed, I should think you would hate the very name of Horah," he said.

Celia looked at him in wonder. What did he mean by talking in so unusual a manner to her? She thought it was scarcely proper, so she answered:

"There is but one of the name now, and I am very much attached to him, sir."

"Mr. Murdok Horah? I am sorry, for your sake, to

hear you say that," said Marman, significantly, and hoping she might ask him why.

Celia was too habitually polite and respectful to do so, but she could not help looking the question which she forbore to put in words.

"Ah, you are surprised. My poor girl, I have something to tell you that may surprise you more," he said, and paused.

Celia looked anxious, but said nothing.

"You master has been compelled to part with you."

"To part—with—me, sir?" inquired the poor woman, in a pleading, fainting tone.

"Yes; he has sold you, but I have bought you, not for trade, but for my own service——"

"Oh, excuse me, sir," breathed the woman, as she sank into the friendly support of her late mistress' old armchair, and covered her face with her hands.

"Now, listen, my good girl, for I am sure you are good——"

"Oh, I never thought, I never thought he could ever have been tempted to sell me—me! who was like a mother to him! who nursed him at my own breast! who have spent days and nights for years nursing him in sickness, and minding him in health! Oh-h-h-h-h-h!" moaned the heartbroken women, dropping her head upon her hands and bursting into heavy sobs and tears.

"My poor girl, he could not help it, indeed. 'Needs must when the devil drives,' you know. And it might have been much worse for you if anybody else had bought you. Now, I mean to do a good part by you. I am going to make you my housekeeper. And you will have no mistress over you, and only one person to wait upon, and that will be me. You see, I am an old bachelor, and live by myself in Alexandria."

Celia scarcely heard him. She was weeping as if the springs of her life were about to dry up.

"Come, come, my girl. Be reasonable and compose

yourself. Why should you grieve so for leaving such an accursed place as this old Hall, or such a master as Mr. Horah?" argued Marman.

"Why, indeed?" gasped the woman, amid her heart-rending sobs.

"Oh, my girl, I have heard such things about the Horahs, of Horah Hall, since I have been down here. Why, they call it Horror Hall! The father who murdered your husband! And the son who has sold you for money!"

"Yes! yes!" she cried, wildly, wringing her hands. "The son who has sold me for money!"

"Go now, my girl, and wash your face and pack your trunk, and get ready to come with me. I will be the kindest master you ever heard of," said Marman, and he fully meant what he said. He had taken a strong liking to Celia, so he, who could be hard, brutal and devilish to other slaves, men or women, could not find it in his heart to be otherwise than kind and forbearing to her.

"I would like to see Mr. Horah first, if you please, sir," said Celia, rising and wiping the tears from her eyes, but not so fast as they flowed.

"I am afraid you cannot, my girl. He requested me to tell you, in case you inquired for him, that he had gone out," said Marman.

"Could not face me? I do not wonder!" muttered Celia.

"There, now. Will you go and get ready, like a good girl?" said Marman, in a soothing tone.

"Yes, sir," she answered, and at once left the room.

"That woman is none of your common niggers. I wouldn't sell her for thrice what I gave for her, I know that," said Marman, and he lighted another cigar and began to smoke, as he walked out to the stable to put the horse to the carryall.

Meanwhile Celia went slowly and heavily up the

stairs to the garret room, which she had occupied since the return of Murdok to the Hall. But as she passed her master's chamber door, she heard a slight movement within, that she knew must have been made by him, since there was no one else in the house then except Marman and herself.

She paused for a moment before his door, and her face changed fearfully. Her complexion assumed a deadly pallor; her eyes half closed and glittered with a fatal fire, and the corners of her mouth were drawn backward and downward, leaving the teeth compressed and snapping. The whole countenance took on the terrible expression that might have reminded one of a snarling, crouching tigress, ready to spring upon its prey; or, of Murdok Horah himself, in his most diabolical moods. One minute she stood thus, and then turned the knob of the door and entered the room.

Murdok Horah was busy gathering his effects, preparatory to removing from the Hall. His back was toward the door, his head bent over his bureau drawers; he did not perceive her entrance.

"Sir!" she said, pausing midway of the room.

"You here! Well, what do you want?" he curtly demanded, without turning. If he had looked at the woman then, and had noticed the expression of her face, he might have received a warning.

"What do you want?" he inquired again, seeing that she was slow to answer.

"I want to know, sir, if it is true, as Mr. Marman tells me, that you have sold me?" replied Celia, with a strange, deadly coldness.

"Yes, I have! There! that's all about it. And the less said soonest mended. The deed is done, and it can't be undone," spoke Horah, all the more harshly because his conscience was bitterly reproaching him for the cruel wrong he had done.

Celia stood still. He never turned to look at her.

If he had, her face would have frightened him, for that terrible look of the crouching tigress was intensely impressed upon it.

"Shall I tell him? Shall I tell him?" she panted under her breath. "No, it would be worse than useless to do so. He would not believe me. Or he would pretend not to do so. And, in any case—yes—he would strangle me where I stand, to prevent me from publishing the truth to the world. I should never be permitted to leave this room alive. No, I will not tell him. I will be as a wise as a serpent, if not as harmless as a dove. I will bide my time."

"Well, what are you waiting for?" angrily demanded Horah, who could not endure her reproachful presence.

"Nothing, sir. You have said that you have sold me. That is all I came to ask," replied Celia, and she turned and left the room.

Half an hour later she came downstairs, bringing her trunk of clothing in her own strong arms.

The carryall was at the door, and Marman stood by the horse's head, waiting for Celia. The woman soon appeared with her trunk, which she lifted into the carryall. Then she climbed into the seat indicated by her new master.

Marman sprang up to the driver's seat, and gathered the reins in his hands, but paused before driving off, to hear something that Horah was shouting to him from the front door.

"Mind you don't forget what I told you. Pick up somebody at the Washington House, to bring that carryall back here for me. I expect to get through with my business and lock up this cursed old roost in time to get to the hotel for dinner," he was saying.

But as he spoke his eyes met those of Celia, and he started back. He saw basilic eyes in a face of stone.

"I'll remember," said the trader, and he drove off at a brisk trot.

But Horah scarcely heard the promise. That momentary collision—for it had seemed a collision—with the eyes of the woman he had so cruelly wronged, had given him a severe nervous shock; had completely upset him, as he himself would have described his sensations, had he cared to speak of them.

What did it all mean? he asked himself. In the first instance, he had expected a scene with her when she should learn her fate. And therefore, reckless as he was, he had tried to keep out of her way. But she had circumvented him, so to speak, and had insisted on hearing her doom from his own lips.

Well, she had heard it. And she had taken it so quietly as to surprise him, and set him wondering whether Marman had not inspired her with hope and ambition. And maybe Marman meant all he promised the woman. Marman was such a fool. And Celia was a very handsome wench. But now—those eyes of fire set in a face of stone! What could it all mean? It troubled him with a vague fear, a superstitious awe, that he could neither understand no overcome.

He reëntered the solitary house—very solitary now, for there was not a human being about the place except himself—and a strange, cold shiver thrilled his frame as he entered the old oak parlor, where the fire was dying out from the hearth, and the sunshine creeping away from the windows.

And here, for the first time, he missed the ministrations of Celia, and began to realize his loss. He had never done a stroke of work in all his life, and now he suddenly discovered that he should have to wait upon himself, or want the necessaries of life. He should have to go out to the wood shed and bring in wood for the fire, or he would half freeze before he could get through the contents of that old secretary, which he deemed it necessary to examine. He set about his unwonted work in a temper of mind which those who

know him can readily imagine. And he gave way to his ill-humor in his usual manner. Cursing was the breath of his nostrils, and he cursed freely.

When he had piled into the fireplace the resinous pine knots and the huge hickory logs, and when the flames roared up the broad chimney, he went to the cupboard and took out a bottle of brandy, uncorked it and put it to his lips, and drained half its contents. Then he drew a chair to the old secretary, sat down before it, placed the brandy bottle on the floor beside him, and proceeded to unlock the drawers and closets of that grand antique piece of furniture, and examine their contents.

Drawer after drawer, closet after closet, he opened and searched with a morbid and increasing desire to "find out" something hidden in the papers of the dead. There was not much at first to reward his profane curiosity. There were sentimental letters from girl friends of the long ago; there were condoling letters from clerical friends on the death of her husband, and there were polite letters from Col. Pryor.

All these he glanced over slightly, with an impatient exclamation of "Bosh!" or "Slush!" or "Rot!" and scattered them over the floor until the room looked as if a litter of puppies had rioted through a large waste-paper basket.

At length he remembered that there was a secret receptacle his mother had told him of, and at the same time told him where to touch the invisible spring. He found and touched this at the bottom of the secretary, when out of what seemed merely the ornamental scroll-work of the pedestal flew a shallow drawer filled with old documents connected with the Horah Hall estate—deeds, mortgages, receipted bills and so forth. All these were yellow with age, and apparently out of date and forgotten. He replaced each paper as he examined it, with a contemptuous exclamation—"Rubbish!"

But before he got through the contents of the drawer he picked up a paper that at once riveted his attention. He stared at it with great, black eyes, that dilated with surprise, delight, and triumph. He sprang from his chair, and, waving the paper above his head, danced about the room in a frenzy of fiendish joy, jumping and shrieking:

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! The beautiful Zenobia is not my ward, is she not, Nat Pryor? No! but she is my slave! my slave! my slave! My goods and chattels! My personal property, whom I may seize and sell! whom I may kiss or beat! just as the humor takes me! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

He seized the brandy bottle and drained it. But he was too much excited to be made drunk by a few glasses of cognac. Then he dropped into the chair and tried to compose himself to think clearly.

"Zenobia my slave! The only piece of property not disposed of by my mother's will! The only thing I have inherited from my mother! But the most precious! I must be cautious, however. I must be secretive. I am sure enough of my game now to take time to forestall all legal delays on their part. There shall be no grounds left for replevin, *habeas corpus,* or any other legal hocus-pocus or claptrap of rogues to cheat honest men out of their rights. Why, I could go to The Notches immediately and claim her and seize her. It would be my right. But there would be a devil of a row. And they might hide her away. No, I will say nothing. Not even drop a hint to let them know that this forgotten paper is in existence. No, I'll go to Winchester tomorrow and see a lawyer, and take all legal steps for getting peaceable possession of my property. All things shall be done 'decently and in order.' Ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! Oh, my beautiful Zenobia! My beautiful slave!"

His antics were interrupted by the sound of wheels. He started up and went to open the door. His own carryall stood there, driven by a servant from the Washington House, who had come, according to Horah's instructions, to drive him back.

Half an hour from that time Murdok Horah, having extinguished the fire and locked the house, left Horah Hall for the Washington House, where he had engaged rooms and board, and where he arrived in time for dinner, with the intention of taking the first train for Winchester.

CHAPTER XX.

AN INTERRUPTED WEDDING.

I saw the young bride in her beauty and pride,
  Bedecked in her snowy array;
And the bright flush of joy mantled high on her cheek,
  And the future looked blooming and gay;
And with woman's devotion she laid her fond heart
  On the shrine of the worthiest love,
And she anchored her hopes to this changeable earth,
  By the chain which her tenderness wove.
But I saw when those heartstrings were bleeding and torn,
  And the chain had been severed in two;
She had changed her bright smile for the weeping of grief,
  And her bloom for the paleness of woe.—DANA.

On the day succeeding the closing of Horah Hall there came the severest snowstorm of the season.

Directly after the early breakfast, Oliver and Tim mounted their horses to ride to Mistyrock—Oliver to his law studies, and Tim to the post office for the morning's mail.

The sky was then completely overcast, the snow was falling slowly, and the wind rising in gusts from behind the northeast mountain range. But no one anticipated the tremendous tempest that was gathering over the earth.

"Oh, this is only a flirt of snow. It will be over in an hour or so," said Col. Pryor, standing in the doorway and waving his hand to his departing son.

But the old weatherwise prophet was mistaken for once. The sky lowered darker and darker, the snow fell faster and faster, the wind rose higher and higher.

By the time the horsemen reached Mistyrock they found themselves in the midst of what would now be called a "blizzard." They went first to the post office,

where Tim dismounted and got the mail, from which Oliver took his own personal letters, and then said:

"Now, Tim, you had better make the very best of your way back before the roads become impassable. I am afraid they will be so in a few hours. And, see here! if such should be the case, just tell father that he must not be uneasy if I do not get home, for I shall not attempt to ride, but will stay with Mr. Godfrey all night. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Marse Noll. All right, sah," replied Tim, as they parted—Oliver for his office, and Tim to the trough in front of the hotel to feed and rest his horse, and have a little gossip with the hostler before starting on his return home.

It was there that he learned two items of news that he was eager to be the first to convey to his master. This state of feeling, coupled with the fast-increasing storm, caused him to mount and put his horse to his best speed to reach home as soon as possible, which he could not do before noon, with the blinding storm whirling about him.

"He done shut up de ole Hall an' lef' de nei'bo'hood, Marse Nat," said Tim, after he had stabled his storm-beaten horse, and appeared in his master's study, mail bag in hand.

"He? Who? Horah?" inquired the colonel, as he examined his mail, in which he found nothing but newspapers and quarterly bills.

"Yes, mars'er, dat same mis'able trash, sah," said Tim, with a breaking voice.

"A good riddance!" exclaimed Col. Pryor. "But, good gracious, Tim, my poor fellow, what is the matter with you? You are not grieving after him, I hope?" he inquired, seeing the clouds and threatening rain on the black man's face.

"Dat ain' likely, Marse Nat. But he done sold Cely,

dat mean trash hab. An' I'se so so'y," cried Tim, bursting into tears.

"What!" exclaimed Nat Pryor, staring at the weeping negro. "Sold Celia! Sold his nurse! His foster mother, who fed him from her own breast! Who certainly saved his life, for he would have died without her care. Sold Celia?"

"Yes, Marse Nat. Yes, sah. He done dat, de low-life chick, he hab. Dat nigger buyer w'at Tige wanted ter chaw toted her off 'long o' him yest'day," said Tim, wiping the tears that trickled down his dark face.

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Nat Pryor. "What would not that beast do? He would sell his own mother if he had one, and could find a purchaser. But, poor devil, he must certainly be mad. No one in his normal senses could be so wicked, so unnatural. No one. Don't take it to heart, my poor fellow. Your grief will do no good."

"Oh, Marse Nat, sah! I can't help it. Po' Cely! I's kno'ed her ebber sence she wer' a little chile no mo' than so high," said Tim, raising his hand with emotion about two feet from the floor.

Col. Pryor sighed heavily, walked to the window and looked out. Nothing could be seen but the white chaos, nothing heard but the howling of the wind through the mountain gorges.

"This is going to be a heavier storm than I thought," he said.

These words reminded Tim of Oliver's message, and he dried his eyes and delivered it.

"I am glad of that," said the colonel. "It would really be a risk for him to venture to ride home to-night. Some of the fences are already covered. I don't know how it will be before dark. Now, Tim, my good fellow, go and see to the fires. They must all be kept up well in this weather," said the colonel.

And the negro smothered a sob and went about his duties.

The colonel shut up his study and walked into the parlor, where he found the two girls seated, one on each side of a work-table, which was drawn up before the fire, and piled with fancy baskets overflowing with laces and ribbons, from which they were constructing elegant neck and wrist gear, doubtless to form part of their home-made trousseau.

"Well, chicks, I have come to tell you that the hawk has flown," exclaimed the old man, drawing his pipe from his pocket and handing it to Jemima.

"What do you mean, ole marse?" inquired the saucy Jemima, as she went to knock the ashes out of the pipe, preparatory to refilling it, her daily delight.

"That poor devil, Horah, has closed the old Hall and left the neighborhood for good," was the highly satisfactory reply.

"Oh, thank God!" fervently breathed Zenobia, clasping her hands, with a sigh of great deliverance.

"He couldn't leave any place except for good—of the place, of course. Joy go with him!" exclaimed Jemima. Then she broke into a song, very popular at that time:

> "Malbrook has gone to the war-ar-ars!
> And we hope he will never return!"

With this she handed the pipe to her uncle, and resumed her seat at the work-table.

Then he told them of the sale of Celia, at which both the girls were very indignant, and Zenobia wept for pity.

The storm raged fiercely without. The fire burned cheerily within. And though they were sorry for Celia, and though they missed Godfrey and Oliver, the evening passed comfortably, as usual at The Notches. They

all retired early, however, though the raging storm around the old house kept them awake many hours.

The next morning, what a transfigured world they looked out upon! The earth seemed overwhelmed in snow, which was still falling. The top of the mountain range was covered, and its whole outline changed by the deep drifts in the gorges. The forests were weighed down. All the fences and low farm buildings were almost buried out of sight.

"I say, girls," exclaimed Col. Pryor, as he gazed out of the front window of the long parlor upon the white tempest, "this is worse than the last storm. It is a good thing, however, and one to be thankful for, that that brute got off yesterday, for, if he had not, he would have remained here, infesting our neighborhood like some foul dragon of fairy lore. For, as sure as a gun, the railway tracks are from two to twelve feet under snowdrifts by this time, and it will be a week or more before they can be cleared."

"Oh, yes, I thank the Lord that he has gone!" devoutly breathed Zenobia.

> "And we hope he will never return,
> And we hope he will never return!"

sang Jemima, with emphatic earnestness.

"Oh, he is not likely to do that for some weeks to come, and by that time you will both be married and on your wedding tours," said the colonel, heartily.

Here the appearance of Druse and Otto, bringing in the breakfast, turned their attention to a more inviting subject. And after that was over the colonel withdrew to his study, and the two girls betook themselves to their needlework, very interesting to them under the circumstances.

The storm turned out to be, as the colonel had predicted, the heaviest of the season. Oliver did not get

home on the second night, nor on the third. On the morning of the fourth day he came, and brought the first news of the outside world that had come to The Notches since the return of Tim from the post office on the first day of the storm. He explained that it was only by day that the road was safe for travel, and that anxiety to see how they all fared under the "anger of the gods" had induced him to come during office hours. He reported all travel stopped on the railroads. He said that no news had been heard of the wretched fugitive slaves from Horah Hall, and that it was feared, as they had not been driven into some humane home for shelter, they must have been destroyed by the storm.

Oliver remained with the family for the rest of that day and night, and returned to his office the next morning.

At length the weather changed; the sun shone out warm for the season, melted the snow and ice, and changed the mountain gorges into rivulets. The wind shifted to the east, bringing rain, which poured down and swelled these rivulets to torrents that partially flooded the valleys, impeding travel, but, happily, causing no loss of life or property.

During this outbreak of wind, rain and flood, Jemima and Zenobia were happy enough by their fireside in the old parlor of The Notches, notwithstanding that the terrible state of the roads kept their lovers away from them most of the time. In the first place, their *bête noir* had left their neighborhood and had departed for parts unknown. In the second place, they were completing their last preparations for their wedding, which was drawing near. The thought by that time the weather must be propitious.

Everyone was happy at The Notches, except the old servants. These humble friends, always taken into confidence, even if not actually consulted on such domestic affairs, had on this occasion, one and all, felt deeply

disgusted with the program of the wedding ceremonies, as it had somewhat irregularly reached their ears. So much were they "offended" that they deputed Tim, the most favored of them all—in fact, the prime minister of their plantation government—to go and expostulate with their master on their grievance.

Accordingly, one morning when Col. Pryor was seated in his old leathern armchair, bending over his writing table, with account books open before him, trying as usual to make the column of income balance the column of outlay, he was interrupted by a timid tap on his study door.

To his good-humored "Come in," little Otto entered, dressed in his Sunday clothes.

"Well, imp, what now?" briskly inquired the colonel.

Otto pulled his wool, bobbed his head, and answered:

"P'ease, ole marse, sah, daddy sen' 'is' 'umble juty ter yer, sah! Daddy do, an' he say—daddy say—will yer p'ease let 'im come in an' talk ter yer, sah, on a deli— deli—— Oh, p'ease, marse, I done forgit de rest," whimpered the child, ready to cry.

"Never mind, never mind," said the good-natured colonel. "Your daddy wants to say something to me, doesn't he?"

"Yes, p'ease, marse."

"Well, upon my word and honor!" exclaimed Nat Pryor, bursting into a roar of laughter. "And the subject seems so important that he must send a herald before him, eh? Well, go tell you daddy to come along."

Otto pulled his wool, bobbed his head and went out.

In a few minutes Tim came in, dressed in his best suit—black coat, ruffled shirt, brass watch chain, and all. He bowed several times, and stood waiting for his master to open the conversation.

"Well, Tim, what is it, my good fellow?" inquired the colonel, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Yes, marser. Yes, sah. Sartinly, sah," said Tim, beginning in a rather inconsequent manner. "Yer see, sah, ef yer p'ease, sah, yer al'ays tole we, dem cullud people, ter fe'ch all our chubbles rite ter yerse'f, sah. Yes, sah."

"Of course I did. Now, what is the matter? Speak right up."

"T'anky, sah. Yes, sah. Well, yer se, marse, it 'lates ter de subjec' ob dis yere weddin'."

"Well, what about it? Speak plainly, man."

"Yes, sah. T'anky, sah. Well, sah, de word do go round dat de ladies an' ge'men is gwine fer ter be ma'ed in broad daylight, an' den fer ter go off on de railroad, way 'mong strangers, ter stay a mont'!"

"Well?"

"Oh, marse, I can't b'liebe it. Yer kno's yerse'f, marse, dey ought fer ter be ma'ed at night, wif booful wax candles, an' weddin' cake, an' fiddlin' an' dancin', an feastin' a whole month here, inter der own neigh-b'od. Now, yer kno's dat wer' al'ays de way wid de ladies an' ge'men yere. An' dis t'other way doane seem lawful ma'age, nohow."

Col. Pryor made no reply. He was silently laughing at the solemnity of Tim's visage.

"Marse, I doane b'liebe dat word wat's gwine round. No, sah, I doane. I on'y 'sires yo' 'thority fer ter con'dic' it," said the man, earnestly.

"I am afraid, Tim, that I cannot contradict it. I am afraid that you have heard the truth," gravely replied the colonel, though he was inwardly convulsed with laughter.

"An' yer's gwine ter 'low dem youn' people ter be so barefaced as ter git ma'ed in broad daylight, an' g'way by demse'ves?"

"I am afraid I cannot help it. Times have changed since we were young, Tim," replied the colonel, with assumed solemnity.

"Den dey outer be 'shamed ob deirse'ves," said the old servant, indignantly.

"Tim! Tim! Take care how you talk, my good fellow. You are not respectful," said the colonel, shaking his head.

"I begs yer pardin', old marse. I didn' mean no dis-r'spec' ter yerse'f, sah. I's al'ays 'spec'ful ter dem as 'haves 'spec'ble. But I doane call dis yere gittin' ma'ed in broad daylight 'spec'ble. I calls it barefaced," persisted the old darky.

"Come, come, Tim! You are really too hard on the young folks. Now, I tell you what I can do. After the young people have gone on their wedding tours, you can have a big party in the long parlor in their honor, with as much fiddling, and dancing, and feasting as you please. And you can keep it up all night, and you may sleep all the next day to rest yourselves. Now, then!" he added.

"Oh, ole marse, 'deed yer's too good fer dis worl', an' heap too good fer us po' darkies. Oh, ole marse, yer's a angel! 'Deed yer is!" exclaimed Tim, half in vague penitence, half in delighted anticipation.

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the fun-loving colonel. "Did you ever see an angel with a gray beard, and with spectacles on his nose and a pipe in his mouth?"

Poor Tim looked abashed, but instantly plucked up his courage, and stoutly replied:

"Yes, sah. I has! I has dat! An' I sees one sittin' right 'fo' my eyes dis bressed minit. An' his name, it is ole Marse Co'nel Nat Pryor! Hik! hik! hik!" he concluded, with the chuckling laugh peculiar to his race.

"Get out of here, you old humbug!" exclaimed the colonel, with a portentous frown that failed utterly to impress Tim. "And tell Druse to make several bushels of cake, and other unwholesome things for your party,

and to call in as many of the young darkies as she may require to help her."

Tim dodged what he affected to fear as an impending blow, and backed out of the study to make his report.

After that there was no more complaints of "new-fangled ways" heard among the darkies.

Druse was quite willing that the young negroes should have a hand in anything provided for the occasion but the wedding cake; she would permit no profane hand so much as to touch it, or scarcely a profane eye to glance at it.

Quiet and unpretentious as the double wedding was to be, "all the saints in heaven," as Jemima declared, "could not have prevented Druse from providing an elegant collation, that might have done credit to a fashionable city caterer."

There was in the rear of the colonel's study a large, square apartment, which had, in former days, been kept as a sort of state dining room. Of late it had never been so used. But now Druse chose to give it a thorough cleaning up.

It was a quaint old place, with walls hung with a French paper representing the city of Constantinople, in very gorgeous colors, with mosques and palaces, turbaned Turks and Ethiopian slaves. This glowing wall paper was the most striking, if not the principal, furniture of the room; for, except it, there was only the large, round dining table, the ample sideboard, and a dozen high-blacked chairs. The brown painted floor had no carpet, the tall windows no curtains, but only brown paper shades; the broad fireplace had a pair of high, brass andirons, and a brass fender; and before the hearth lay a Turkey rug. The high mantel was adorned with a pair of tall silver candlesticks. This was all.

In this room, newly furnished up, and decorated with

evergreens brought from the mountains the night before the wedding, Druse built a great fire of hickory logs, "to air and heat it in time," she said, and set the table for the wedding feast.

The widding day dawned clear and bright, and mild, as if nature meant to compensate her children for the terrible weather of the preceding week.

Godfrey and Oliver had remained at Mistyrock overnight, in order to bring the doctor with them. For this purpose, instead of going to town on horseback as usual, they had taken the old, capacious family carriage.

The colonel and the two girls had a quiet, early breakfast, and then separated to dress for the ceremony, while the servants industriously cleared off the table, replenished the fire, and decorated the room. Finally they went away to adorn themselves in their Sunday best, to do honor to the occasion.

Col. Pryor was the first to appear in the parlor in full dress, in readiness to receive his guests, while Tim, even finer than his master, waited in the front hall to open the door and announce the arrivals.

As the hour of noon drew near, Lawyer Clement Kent, his wife, son and daughter were the first to arrive.

Servia, looking handsome and happy, in a red merino gown, with white ruffles at her throat and wrists, took charge of the ladies and conducted them to a room where they could lay off their bonnets and wraps, and rearrange their toilets.

Little Otto, smart in a new suit of clothes, performed the same service for the gentlemen.

And then Col. Pryor received the whole party in the parlor with great cordiality.

The next to come were the Rev. and Mrs. Melville, with their three daughters. These were received and attended to in the same manner.

The last to make their appearance were Dr. Bland, Godfrey and Oliver. The old doctor threw off his overcoat in the hall, and went immediately into the parlor, and shook hands all round with his friends.

Oliver took Godfrey to his own room, where they gave some finishing touches to their toilets, and waited until they should be summoned to the marriage ceremony, which was to come off at the hour of noon.

Meantime, in Jemima's apartment, the two brides were also waiting, attended by Servia. They were very simply dressed in white silk trained gowns, plainly made, and long, white tulle veils attached to their heads, with slender wreaths of white moss rosebuds. A bouquet of the same flowers rested on their bosoms. White kid gloves and white morocco boots completed their toilets.

They were such beautiful girls in their commonest clothes that they could not be more beautiful in bridal array. It was only the dress that made them seem so.

Just as the clock in the hall was striking twelve there came a light tap at the door.

Servia opened it.

Col. Pryor stood there, ready to lead his girls down to their expectant bridegrooms. He was smiling through his sadness.

"Come, come, my loves!" he called, cheerily, though his voice broke a little.

They went out to him, and one after the other kissed and embraced him. Then he led them downstairs, followed by Servia.

At the foot they found Godfrey and Oliver waiting. Each young man received the hand of his bride from the colonel, drew it under his arm and led her into the parlor. Godfrey and Jemima being the elders, took precedence and entered first. Oliver and Zenobia followed.

It was a very plain little assembly that waited in

the room. The Rev. Mr. Melville, in gown and band, and with prayer book in hand, stood on the hearth rug, with his back to the open fire. Right and left of him were grouped the few wedding guests already named.

Godfrey and Jemima advanced, bowed and stood before the minister. Oliver and Zenobia, coming up behind, separated and went—Oliver to the side of the bridegroom, and Zenobia to the side of the bride—for in the first ceremoney they were to officiate as best man and bridesmaid.

And now, amid the stillness of the company in the parlor, and of all the servants gathered in the hall, and looking in at the open doors, the minister unclasped the covers of his prayer book. The bridal pair knelt, and the clergyman commenced to read the solemn marriage ritual of the Episcopal Church. He proceeded slowly and reverently, not deeming it well to hurry, as some do, over so serious a service as that which would bind a young pair together for the term of their natural lives. When the proper moment arrived, Col. Pryor, acting for the absent father, gave away the bride. Then followed mutual vows and the benediction.

When this was said, and the newly married pair received the hearty and sincere congratulations of their friends, they retired a few feet from before the minister, and Oliver and Zenobia took their places. Then Godfrey and Jemima came forward again and acted as best man and bridesmaid for them. Such a proceeding was unusual, perhaps unprecedented, but there was no law against it, and the young people would have it so.

The second marriage ceremony was commenced in the same slow, solemn and impressive manner amid the reverential silence and stillness of the spectators. The opening exhortation was scarcely half through when there was heard a knock at the front door, fol-

lowed by the opening of the door and the bustling of some one entering the hall.

A troupe of servants were known to be out there who could attend to any chance visitors. So no one in the parlor even turned their heads. Their whole attention was fixed upon the young pair and the minister who was marrying them, and who was now impressively uttering the solemn adjuration:

"If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be united together, let him now speak, or else, hereafter, forever hold his peace."

The minister made the usual short, formal pause, and the dead silence was suddenly broken by a rude, insulting laugh, as Murdok Horah strode into the room, followed by a constable and several other men, and in a derisive and defiant voice, exclaimed:

"All right, old fellow! I can! I claim that girl, Zenobia, as my mulatto slave!"

But before the words were well out of his lips, Oliver Pryor had hurled himself upon the monster, like a mastiff on a bull, and grappled his throat in a death grip.

CHAPTER XXI.

AMAZEMENT.

No words can describe the scene of dismay, confusion and consternation that ensued. Women screamed. Men rushed to the rescue. Oliver Pryor held Murdok Horah down upon the floor, with his knees pressed upon his chest, and his hands tightened around his throat, and then and there must have choked him to death had not Col. Pryor, Dr. Bland, Mr. Melville and Gilbert Godfrey, all at once, seized the young fury. It took their united efforts to tear him from his prey, for Oliver seemed possessed of the force and ferocity of a lion.

"Oliver! Oliver! Oliver! My son!" pleaded the distressed father. "Let go that man's throat! Let go, I say! You are murdering a mere maniac! He is not responsible for what he says or does. Don't you see that he is as mad as the madest lunatic in bedlam? My dear boy, our cause is too good and assured for violence. Why, we can shut him up in a lunatic asylum for this outrage!"

While the colonel talked he succeeded in tearing Oliver's fingers from Horah's throat. The rescuers held the young man fast, while he bitterly reproached them for not allowing him to execute justice on the criminal in defense of his bride.

Meanwhile Horah, rolling ignominiously on the floor, gasped, panted, floundered and spluttered in struggling to recover his breath, which had been nearly choked out of his body. The first use he made of his restored respiration was to fall to cursing, swearing, blaspheming and threatening, and in trying to rise and assault somebody.

Constable Bowen came to his side, stooped over him, and whispered, soothingly:

"Now just try to be quiet, Mr. Horah, sir. It will be so much the better for you. You seem to have all the law on your side; now let everything on your part be done peacefully and according to law. We will take the girl by the law. After that you can swear out a warrant and have that young fireeater arrested for assault and battery, with intent to kill."

While the officer spoke he raised Horah to his feet, and led the faint, dizzy, trembling and infuriated man across the room, and seated him in an armchair.

"Now, sir, pray keep still, and leave the matter in my hands," was the advice of the constable, as he turned away and went to Col. Pryor, who was also advancing toward him, having left Oliver in the safe custody of his friends.

"You are an officer of the law?" said the colonel, drawing himself up to a halt.

"Yes, sir. And you, Col. Pryor, are a law-abiding citizen, who will not hinder me in the discharge of my unpleasant duty," diplomatically returned the constable.

"Most certainly not. But will you explain, without further preamble, the exact nature of this 'most unpleasant duty'?" inquired the colonel.

"Yes, sir; of course. I bear a warrant for the seizure of a certain mulatto girl, by name Zenobia, claimed as the slave of Murdok Horah, Esq., of Horah Hall, in this county, and unlawfully harbored and protected by you, sir," coolly replied the constable.

"Bland! Godfrey! Kent! Hold that boy fast!" This, in vociferous tones, was directed to the gentlemen who held Zenobia's betrothed husband captive, notwithstanding his renewed and violent efforts to escape them, and throw himself upon his antagonist.

Then, turning again to the officer, he replied to his words:

"There is no such girl as you describe in this house,

nor do I know of such a girl in existence," the colonel added, emphatically.

"Excuse me, sir, but Mr. Horah identified the girl and pointed her out to me before he spoke to forbid her marriage. She was also recognized by Adams and Carson, who came with us," said the constable.

"Mr. Melville, for Heaven's sake, go and help them to hold Oliver there! He is getting to be too much for them. If he gets away there will be mischief done!" exclaimed the colonel. Then, turning again to the constable, he said:

"It is a mistake. You have been deceived. Who issued this ridiculous warrant?"

"Squire Judah Calhoun, sir, a magistrate of Winchester, on the application of Mr. Murdok Horah, which application was backed by his affidavit, supported by the exhibition of a certain bill of sale of one Lewis Wharton, of Baltimore, transferring one mulatto slave woman, Servia, and her female child, Zenobia, to Mrs. Isabel Horah, for the sum of eight hundred dollars; and now, in the natural course of events, falling to her only son and heir, Murdok Horah, as I said."

"Oh-h-h! that is it, eh?" muttered the colonel, with a low whistle, and then a laugh.

"Yes, sir, that's it. Of course, Mr. Horah knows, as he has informed us, that a deed of manumission from the late Mrs. Horah has freed the woman Servia, but no such favor, it seems, has been bestowed on the girl Zenobia, who remains his slave."

"Oliver Pryor!" resolutely exclaimed the colonel, turning sharply upon his stormy, furious and rebellious son, who, at certain crises like this just now, broke into wild frenzy, "if you do not keep quiet, if you give these gentlemen any more trouble, I will come over there and bind you hand and foot, myself."

Having delivered this warning, the colonel boldly replied to the constable:

"The affidavit upon which that warrant was issued was a perjury, as Mr. Horah knew it to be. The young lady who has been so outrageously insulted by this procedure, is a Spanish girl, the orphan daughter of the late Señor Don Lorenzo de Leon, a gentleman of Cadiz, Spain, and of his wife, Donna Dolores; she became the adopted daughter of the late Mrs. Horah, and at the present time my ward and the promised bride of my son. Whoever says and swears to the contrary tells a lie and commits perjury!"

"But that bill of sale, sir?" dubiously queried the officer.

"That bill of sale, so far as it included Miss de Leon, was an infamous, fraudulent document, as Mr. Horah perfectly well knew when he perjured himself to secure that disgraceful warrant, as I shall be abundantly able to prove. Why, you, yourself, looking at me now, see the truth of what I am telling you," he added, meeting the officer's eyes.

"It may be all so, sir, but for all that, I have no choice but to do my duty—that is, serve the warrant and take the girl," said the officer, civilly and reluctantly.

"And we have no alternative but to submit to the outrage, since we must not resist the law," grimly assented the colonel. "But," he added, "I will go before the magistrate, taking these gentlemen with us, who will be able to testify to the facts I shall set forth, which must not only free us from this inconvenience, but ultimately, I hope, consign yonder fellow to a lunatic asylum, if not to the State prison."

Well, sir, we can only hope that justice will be done, let who may go to the wall," replied the constable, in a noncommittal manner.

"Amen!" responded the colonel, with all his heart.

"And now, sir, I must secure——"

"One word more," exclaimed the colonel, interrupting the speaker. "I hope that there will be no objection to my taking my young ward to the railway station in my own carriage, or to my keeping her by my side in the car seat, and leading her on my arm to the magistrate's presence?"

The constable hesitated to reply.

"Of course," then added Col. Pryor, "if it be necessary that you should keep her in sight during the journey——"

"Which it is, sir; I being responsible for her from the moment I take her into custody," said Bowen.

"Then you can sit with us and keep as near to her as you wish."

"Under such cimcumstances, sir, there can be no objection to your plan."

"Then I will go and order the carriage at once," said Col. Pryor.

He crossed over to the door where the confused and terrified servants were standing and listening to all that passed, and gave directions to Tim to have horses harnessed to the family carriage and also to the buggy, to take the party to the railway station. Then he went up to the end of the room where the shocked, grieved and perplexed members of the wedding circle were gathered.

Oliver was now quieted in some measure, and was seated on the sofa at the back part of the room, with his elbows on his knees, his head bowed, his face buried in his hands. On either side of him sat Dr. Bland and Mr. Melville, who were doing and saying all they could to soothe and comfort him.

"It will be all right, my dear boy," said the colonel, heartily, patting his shoulder as he passed. "Our Zenobia is as safe as she can be. And we shall cover that

beast with disgrace, even if I do not shut him up, as I hope to do."

Then, leaving Oliver, he went to the spot where Godfrey and Jemima stood whispering earnestly together, and said to the young man:

"My dear boy, man proposes, but a higher power disposes, as you know. You will not, therefore, start on your wedding trip to-day, but must accompany us to Winchester to testify in behalf of Zenobia, that Servia had no child when she was sold by the sheriff to Wharton, and by Wharton to me for Mrs. Horah, and to other points bearing on the infamous claim of this scoundrel to the ownership of our precious girl."

"Of course, of course, I will go with you, sir," replied Godfrey. "Jemima and I had already settled to give up our trip and stay with you until this wretched affair is over."

"Thank you, my boy. I knew I could depend upon you; and on you, too, Jemima," said the colonel, turning to his niece. "You will also accompany us? You will not leave your companion in her trouble, without the support and countenance of one female friend?"

"Never!" energetically exclaimed the girl. "Of course I will stand by her until the very last. I will go now and change my dress. And she will have to change hers, too. It will never do to travel in white silk wedding dresses and veils," she added, with a faint attempt to be easy and cheerful.

"Come, Zenobia; come, my dear," she called, first looking around the room, and then going through the parlor in search of her friend, whom she expected to find crouching in some corner chair or sofa. "Come, we are all going with you to Winchester, to overwhelm your persecutor, and bring you back in triumph. Come."

But there was no response! Zenobia was not in the room.

"Where can she be?" anxiously inquired Col. Pryor.

"Of course she has run off to hide herself in her own room," exclaimed Jemima, confidently. "And who can wonder? Why, she is more afraid of that monster than I should be of a roaring lion let loose on me. I will go and fetch her back when we have changed our dresses," she concluded, as she hurried away.

At this moment, Tim entered the room, and went up to the colonel, and announced the carriages.

"And now, indeed, sir, we have no more time to lose. We must catch the next train, or we shall have to wait over till to-morrow, which will be very inconvenient and unpleasant to all parties. Where is the young girl?" anxiously inquired the constable, looking around the room. "I certainly saw her here a few minutes ago."

"She has gone to get ready. She will be here in a few moments," replied Col. Pryor, speaking as he really thought.

"I—I wish she had not left the room," muttered the constable, uneasily.

"She has gone to change her gown. You could not take her on a railway journey in her wedding dress," said the colonel.

"I could, in any clothes. And I wish she hadn't slipped away," grumbled the man.

"Sir," said Col. Pryor, severely, "I hold myself personally responsible for the appearance of Miss de Leon when she may be wanted."

"All right, colonel. So long as you say so. But if she was to get away, it would be awkward for me in my position," replied the officer.

"Well, now what are you waiting for?" demanded Murdok Horah, once more coming to the front.

"The young lady is changing her dress, sir," replied Bowen.

"'Young lady!' Why don't you say 'nigger' at once?

She is a nigger, and my nigger at that, as I shall make her feel when I once get my hands on her. Ha! ha! ha!"

Col. Pryor looked anxiously toward Oliver, fearing some new outbreak. The youth still sat on the distant sofa, with his face buried in his hands. He had not heard the cruel and inhuman taunt and threat, and his father thanked Heaven for that.

At this moment Jemima entered the room, ready for her journey, in her plainest dark suit.

"Where is Zenobia?" inqured the colonel.

"Why, I thought she was down here. I could not find her in her room, nor anywhere else upstairs, and so, of course, I concluded that she had come down," exclaimed Jemima, speaking rapidly in her excitement.

"No, she is not here," said the colonel, uneasily, "but she may be in the study or the back dining room. I will see," he added, immediately leaving the parlor, followed by the constable and Horah, both very much excited.

The search was fruitless. Neither in the house nor in any part of the premises could any trace of the missing girl be found. Anxious inquiries were then made of each individual as to when Zenobia was last seen.

It was evident from all answers that Zenobia had been in the room up to a few minutes before she was first missed by Jemima, and that no one had seen her leave the parlor, though all admitted that she might easily have gone out without their knowledge, as their attention was momentarily diverted from her by the conversation between Col. Pryor and Constable Bowen.

"As for me," declared the constable, "I could swear that my eyes were not off the young person for an instant. Why, I even thought I saw her when I went up to take her, and then suddenly missed her for the first time, and asked the colonel where she was, and

he told me that she had gone to get ready for her journey."

"Ah, yes! It was you, you cursed old fraud!" exclaimed Murdok Horah, striding up to Col. Pryor and spluttering and stuttering with rage. "You have hidden my slave somewhere about your cursed old robber's den, or you have aided and abetted her in running away from her lawful master! You have, you infernal old humbug! But I'll have the law of you! I'll send you to the State prison for this, you cursed old sneak!"

Col. Pryor took no more notice of this profane and indecent onslaught than he would have taken of the furious barking of some ill-conditioned street cur. He only looked uneasily around the room for Oliver, as if deprecating any fresh outbreak in his behalf from that excitable young man. He was relieved to perceive that Oliver was not in the room. No one else, not even the stalwart Gilbert Godfrey, seemed ready to interfere. Anyone who felt like throwing Horah out of the door or window knew very well that Nat Pryor, who was perfectly able to take care of himself, would not be pleased at any such interference. So Horah cursed, swore and raved until Constable Bowen laid his hand on his shoulder and firmly, though soothingly, said:

"Come, come, sir! You are going too far! You are really going——"

"Shut up, you cursed fool! It is all your fault. And I tell you what, you infernal rascal, I believe you are in league with this old cheat and swindler! Yes, I do! And if you have let my nigger get away I'll have you kicked out of your office in double-quick time! I will, as sure as my name is Murdok Horah!"

"Which it is not!" said a quiet voice from some place not far off.

Everyone who heard it turned to see who had spoken, but none discovered the speaker.

"Officer," said Col. Pryor, addressing Constable

Bowen, "I am in the commission of the peace for this county, and I order you to arrest that man for disorderly conduct and profane language."

"And keep him until certain questions now to be raised shall be settled!" said the same mysterious voice that had spoken before.

All turned toward the door, and saw standing there a group of newcomers, consisting of a tall, spare, middle-aged man, with a young face, but a venerably white head and beard; and Marman, the slave trader, and Celia, the quadroon.

Horah, who had been, as it were, suddenly "brought up" by the order of Col. Pryor, followed by the words of the mysterious visitor, now recognized Marman turned upon him by preference, and fiercely demanded:

"What the devil brings you here?"

"Oh, business," coolly replied the trader. "I have come down to this neighborhood, where I swore I would never set foot again, only to try to make the best of a bad bargain. To make a trade with the executor of the Horah estate, if I can."

"What do you mean by that, you insulting scoundrel? There is no executor. I am the heir, in possession!" roared Horah.

"I think not. I think that you are only an inconsiderable item in the schedule of personal property left by your master, the late Murdok Horah; and I am here now, as I said, to try and make the best of a bad bargain by exchanging Celia, whom you had no right to sell—in fact, it was a sin in you to sell, seeing that she is your own dear mammy!—though maybe you didn't know that! Well, anyhow, I don't want to be an out-and-out loser by the transaction, and so I have come here to try and make a trade with the executor, by exchanging Celia for you! To be sure, you are half crazy, but you are a muscular fellow, and I should like nothing better than to break you in and train you!"

"Train me! What are you jabbering about, you infernal idiot? Are you drunk?" furiously demanded Murdok Horah, while all the spectators looked on in amazement too profound for speech or action.

"I will leave Dr. Hawkins to explain," said Marman.

All the company drew nearer the speakers, feeling, apparently, as if they were in some nightmare dream from which they could not awaken; all that was passing around them seemed so unreal.

And now the tall, while-haired man came forward, and addressing Col. Pryor, said:

"How do you do, sir? Have twenty years so changed me that you do not recognize the young medical practitioner who tried his ''prentice hand' on your illness so long ago?"

"Why, Hawkins! Hawkins! This is yourself, indeed and in truth. This is a day of wonders. And I refuse to be surprised at anything. Of course I recognize you. You had black hair and side whiskers in those days. And now you have white hair and beard. Yet I should have known you. I hear you are saving people on earth, or sending them to heaven, with great profit to yourself, in Alexandria," said the colonel, whom no stress of fate or crisis of fortune could deprive of his joke.

"And you would ask me, if you were not too polite, what brings me here? Well, matters savoring more of mediæval romance than of medical practice."

"Yes, by Jove! Out with it!" exclaimed the colonel.

"Am I to have my nigger or not?" vociferated Horah.

"Not!—most decidedly not!" answered the doctor, speaking for all concerned.

Horah began to curse, and swear, and threaten—his usual course of argument.

"First tell me," said the doctor, "are you the executor of the Horah estate?"

"I was until the heir apparent came into possession," replied the colonel.

"Then you are still, for there is no heir apparent!"

At these words everyone stared in perplexity, and Murdok Horah went off into a paroxysm of fury and blasphemy.

"I charge you to hold that man, Bull Boker, calling himself Murdok Horah, as a slave and a part of the personal property of the heirs of the Horah estate!" said Dr. Hawkins, solemnly.

The effect of this announcement upon the assembled company would be difficult to imagine, impossible to describe.

Murdok Horah, with a howl of fury, rushed across the room, and would have flung himself upon the speaker, had not the constable and the men whom he had brought to the house for a very different purpose swiftly intercepted him, and held him to prevent violence.

"Great God of Heaven, Dr. Hawkins! Do you comprehend the force of what you are saying?" demanded Col. Pryor, pale, aghast and perplexed beyond measure by what he had heard.

"I know perfectly well what I am saying," calmly replied the doctor, "and I repeat that that man there is not Murdok Horah, the son of the late Murdok Horah, nor ever was a white man; but he is Bullard Boker, son of Henry Boker and his wife, Celia, all quadroons and slaves of the late Murdok Horah, and all bearing so strong a family likeness to their master as to have rendered the imposture very easy under other circumstances that favored it."

"For Heaven's sake, doctor! What a startling revelation! Why were not those facts, if known to you, made known to others at the proper time?" inquired Col. Pryor, in stronger emotion than we have ever seen him betray.

"Because I myself have only recently discovered the imposture!"

"And where, then, is the true Mordok Horah?"

"In the kingdom of heaven! For the Divine Master said, 'Of such is the kingdom!' The lovely child of Isabel Horah died in his infancy, of sudden congestion of the brain, while his mother lay ill and unconscious of all around her. I, myself, standing by his bedside, saw the child breathe his last breath, closed his eyes, arranged his limbs, and covered the little body before I left the house. But, sir, I have so much to say in explanation of this long imposture—of what made it possible, of what caused my own long ignorance of it, and, finally, of what brought about my recent discovery of it—that perhaps you would prefer to hear the story in the privacy of your study?" suggested the doctor.

"Not at all. All these gentlemen and ladies are near and trusted friends. You can speak before them," said the colonel, confidently.

And then all turned to look on Murdok Horah, or the man who had so long and so haughtily borne that name. And all were struck with surprise, compassion and wonder at the change that had come over him. The blighting, blasting, withering change. No longer rude, defiant, aggressive! but conquered, humbled and despairing, he sat with his big hands grasping his knees, his eyes starting from his head and fixed upon the floor, and his huge frame shuddering at intervals as with an ague fit. Somehow, the truth of the doctor's statement had forced itself irresistibly even into his stolid mind. He could not, of course, remember the period of that criminal exchange which had substituted himself for the dead child of Isabel Horah, to whom, at that time, in age and appearance, he was a perfect counterpart—an imposture of which he was alike innocent and ignorant. But he could remember, in his early childhood, the passionate love lavished on

him by the woman, Celia; such love as no mere nurse, or simple foster mother, none but a true, natural mother, could ever lavish on a son; a son who, also, was an only child! A hundred instances of this adoring devotion recurred to his memory. Also strange sayings of hers, that used to puzzle him in his childhood, now became intelligible to his despairing mind!

Meanwhile, Dr. Hawkins had thrown himself into a seat to commence his explanation.

Celia had dropped upon a cushion on the floor, and sat with her head bowed upon her knees in the most profound grief, despair and humility. She had never once looked toward her son since her entrance into the house. Nor, after the first astonished stare at her when she appeared in the room, had he even glanced toward her.

Marman, the trader, stood with folded arms, leaning against the door frame.

All the other members of the small assembly were grouped about, sitting or standing, at their convenience, and eagerly waiting for Dr. Hawkins' revelation.

Only Oliver Pryor was nowhere to be seen. His distressed father had no doubt that he had started out in search of Zenobia.

Such was the situation when Dr. Hawkins commenced his strange tale.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TABLES TURNED.

And all sat mute,
Pondering with deep thoughts; and each
In other's countenance read his own dismay,
Astonished.—MILTON.

"Friends, most of us here, being old neighbors, remember that dreadful tragedy at Horah Hall, that murder and suicide, which threw the late Mrs. Horah into a brain fever, from which she barely escaped with her life and reason," said Dr. Hawkins, and he paused.

Several present nodded a grave reply.

"I was her attending physician on that occasion, and having but few other cases on my hands, and none serious except her own, and being deeply interested in that, I spent much time, including several nights, at the Hall. It was I who ordered that her unweaned babe should be taken entirely away from the feverish and delirious mother, and given to this woman to be nursed."

At this allusion to herself, Celia raised her head for a moment, and groaned forth in agonized tones:

"Oh, my God! my God, forgive me!" and then dropped her face in her hands and wept bitterly.

The doctor continued:

"Celia was at that time a very fine, wholesome young woman, nursing her first child, and quite capable of nourishing twins. And, indeed, these children, when I saw them together, looked exactly like twins, with nothing to distinguish them apart except the fine dress of the little gentleman, and the plain clothing of the little slave. But such family resemblance, as you know, is not rare on the Horah plantation. Celia and her

husband, who were the real parents of this man here," continued the doctor, "were cousins of the third or fourth degree, yet they and the late master of Horah Hall were near enough alike to be taken for blood relations. For my own convenience in treating the sick mother, and at the same time keeping an eye on the babe, I ordered Celia to occupy a room on the same floor with her mistress.

"One morning, after I had made my usual call on my interesting patient, and found her showing some slight signs of improvement, I crossed the hall and entered the room occupied by Celia and the children. She was sitting in her nursing-chair, with the little Murdok lying across her knees. I saw at a glance that the child was extremely ill. I questioned the woman sharply while making my examination of the little sufferer, and learned that the babe had been seized with convulsions a few minutes before—sudden, short, but severe. The first thing I thought of then was to protect the mother whose life was in jeopardy. I could do nothing for the child, who was dying fast. I locked the door, and then asked the woman if any of the servants knew of this attack on the child.

"'No, sir, not one,' she answered.

"Then I told her not to let anyone know of it for the present, for, if the fact should come to the knowledge of the poor mother, who was then showing signs of returning consciousness, the shock would be likely to kill her. Then Celia asked me what she should do in case the mother should, on waking, ask to see the child. I told her to put the poor lady off with some excuse. But Celia said:

"'She dotes on him, and if she insists on seeing him, what can I do? Carry him in as he is?'

"Then, my friends, I made a fatal mistake, and unconsciously threw a terrible temptation in the way of the nurse," said the doctor, with a profound sigh.

And here Celia again lost her self-control, and began to weep and wail, and wring her hands.

"Friends," continued the doctor, "you will have anticipated the character of my error. After a few moments of reflection, which should have brought me to a better conclusion, I said:

"'No, no! Do not take the dying child to the sick mother. It would kill her! No! If she should insist on seeing her babe, and become excited over her desire, dress your own child, and take him to her to quiet her. They are counterparts. She will never know the difference, especially in her weakened condition and in a darkened room. Has she ever seen your child?' I inquired.

"Celia said that her mistress had never seen her, herself, and knew nothing about her or her child, she being an outdoor servant, she added.

"Well, friends, I sat by the dying child, using every palliative means in my power to relieve his sufferings, until about an hour after noon, when he breathed his last sigh, and was at rest. Then I composed his limbs, closed his eyes, and covered his face. I gave Celia my last warnings and directions. I told her on no account to let the poor, sick, afflicted mother know of her new bereavement, but for the present to act under the instructions I had already given her. I added that when the proper time should come, and the patient should be strong enough to hear the sad truth, that the minister, Mr. Melville, would be the proper person to break it to her.

"Then I looked in upon Mrs. Horah, who was calmly sleeping, watched by her faithful nurse. And finally I left the house, with the promise to come back early the next morning.

"Ah! my friends," continued the doctor, "it has been often said that none can tell what a day may bring forth. I say that none can tell what an hour, what a

minute, may bring forth. I left Horah Hall that afternoon, fully intending to be there again not later than eight o'clock the next morning. That was more than twenty years ago. I have not seen the place since. My old neighbors who are present will remember my sudden departure."

Here again several of the company bowed assent.

"When I called at the post office, on my way home that night, I found a letter from my sister, calling me to the deathbed of my father. I had only time to write a short note to Dr. Bland, inclosing a list of my patients and asking him to take charge of them, to pack my valise, and catch the stagecoach for Alexandria. Now, Celia, perform your penance. Tell the company what you did after my departure," concluded the doctor.

Celia rose, sobbing, trembling, shuddering.

"Oh, God forgive me!" she cried. "I was tempted beyond what I could bear. When the doctor left me first, I did not think of the sin I afterward committed. I only thought of having all things ready for my mistress, in case she should call for the child. So I washed and dressed my baby in his dead little master's fine clothes. And he looked the very little master himself. And I thought, why should this child have been born a slave, and that child a gentleman, when the very Horah blood runs in the veins of both? And I thought, oh! why could not the poor little slave child have died and have been saved from the bitter life of bondage under the Horahs? And, oh, at this moment how I wish that he had! I thought, why should the poor lady in that sick room, who had lost all and suffered so much, ever have to suffer this also? And I looked at the child—my child—and thought that if she should really receive him as her own, how cruel it would be ever to undeceive her. And I thought—oh, what matters it what I thought? Satan entered me, and the

subtlety of Satan everybody knows! I had been told not to let the servants know that the little master was dead yet a while, for fear it would come to the ear of the mistress, and be her death blow. Then I changed the clothes of the dead child, and called in my fellow servants, and told that my child was dead. I received a great deal of sympathy, and Cindy and Delphy sat up with me all night.

"In the morning, Dr. Bland came, and, after seeing the mistress, was going out, when I met him and asked him where Dr. Hawkins was, for I felt astonished that he should come instead of our own doctor.

"Then he told me of Dr. Hawkins' sudden summons to his father's deathbed, and that he was attending to his patients.

"Then I asked him if Dr. Hawkins had told him anything about the death of the child.

"He asked me: 'What child?'

"I told him, my child—meaning, if I should be accused of lying, to say my nurse-child. But the doctor was very kind, and seemed to pity me very much.

"Then I was sure that he knew nothing about the death of the little master, and I was resolved that neither he nor anyone else should know; from me, at least. And that my baby should enjoy the honors of the little heir of Horah as long as possible; or until the return of the family physician, who was to decide when the news should be broken to the poor mother.

"So the little heir was buried under the name of my child, and my child took his place in the household, and no one suspected the truth. It was, however, a week or more before my mistress asked to see her child, for she had had a relapse. When I took my baby in to her, she received him with much emotion, saying that he was her only comfort. All that she had to live for. I could not have had the hard heart to undeceive her then, even if I had not promised not to do it.

"The doctor never came back. Time passed on, and the lady never learned the truth. I had my secret self-defense in that I had promised not to tell her the bad news until the doctor should give me leave, and get the parson to break it to her. I knew, of course, that the doctor fully expected to be back the next morning, and had never intended to keep the truth from her longer than necessary for her safety. I know now what I ought to have done," continued Celia. "I ought to have gone to Parson Melville and told him all about it, and have left it to him to tell my mistress when he should see fit. But I didn't.

"And then I heard that Dr. Hawkins' father was dead, and that he had succeeded to his father's large practice in Alexandria, and was not coming back here any more, and that he had sent his nephew, a young law student, down here to close up his office and settle up his business; and when I noticed that the young man, when he brought his uncle's bill to be settled, said nothing at all about the child, I felt quite safe in my course.

"Yes, Satan had possession of me. Well, many people know how I nursed that child, and how I devoted my whole life to him. Yet, when he grew to manhood, he sold me! True, he did not know I was his real mother, but he knew I had devoted my life to him, with all a real mother's love. Sometimes I think he felt it.

"Yet he sold me for money. And by that deed he pulled down ruin upon himself and me. I was taken to Alexandria, the very city where Dr. Hawkins was settled.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, perhaps Dr. Hawkins will tell you how he found me out," concluded Celia, as, with a courtesy, she sank upon her hassock again and buried her face in her hands.

The counterfeit Murdok Horah was at this crisis a study for a psychological student. He seemed to have been struck with idiocy. He sat on one of the high-

backed chairs, bent forward, with his elbows on his huge knees, his face down and his black-bearded chin clutched in both hands, staring with protruded eyes upon the floor; never speaking, never moving from that position during the whole of Celia's confession.

"I cannot hold myself blameless for what has been done," gravely resumed the doctor. "I should have kept some sort of surveillance over affairs at Horah Hall, even from a distance. But the fact is, when I was so suddenly and peremptorily summoned away, and left my small practice in the hands of an elder and abler physician than myself, I felt that I had done my whole duty to them. I could not have suspected that this unhappy woman would have seized the opportunity afforded her to perpetrate a permanent fraud upon her mistress. I found my father extremely ill, and never left him until he died. Then his large practice, to which I succeeded, demanded immediate attention. I could not even take time to return to Mistyrock to settle my affairs, but sent my nephew, with full instructions. Afterward I settled down in Alexandria to the hardest sort of work. Years passed. I had no correspondents in Mistyrock. I had gone there a stranger, to seek my fortune in my profession. I never found it to any great extent. I went away almost as much a stranger. I heard no more of Mistyrock.

"The place and its interests were fading from my memory, when an incident that occurred a few days since recalled my experience there to mind—very vividly to mind, indeed. Among my patients in Alexandria was Mr. Marman, here. Last week I was called to him. He was suffering from an attack of acute rheumatism, which I was so fortunate as to promptly relieve.

"But, coming in and out of his room, I saw the woman Celia, and recognized her at once by what had been traditionally termed 'the baleful beauty of the

Horahs.' But I made no sign. She did not immediately recognize me, for I had changed much more than she had.

"At length, however, when she had left the room, to prepare something for her master, which I knew must occupy her for some time, I inquired of my patient, who was then comparatively free from pain, how long he had had that woman in his possession.

"He then told me that he had owned her but a short time, having purchased her from young Mr. Horah, of Horah Hall.

"I am not a nervous man. I did not start on hearing this name, but inquired who this Mr. Horah might be, whether cousin or nephew of the late master of the manor?

"Then he stared at me in surprise, and answered that, of course, he was the son—the only son and heir of the late Murdok Horah, and that he had but recently reached his majority and entered upon his estates.

"I then explained my question by saying that I had been under the strong impression that the only child of the late Mr. Horah had died in infancy.

"At this crucial moment Celia entered the room again, and heard my last words. She sank into a chair, pale as death, and shaking from head to foot, as Marman replied to my remark, assuring me, in his own language, that so far from having died in infancy, young Murdok Horah was alive and kicking, and very much kicking. Then I inquired what sort of a looking man this Horah was. And he answered that he was a large, bloated, dark-skinned fellow, with a kinky, black hair and beard, and looked more like a mulatto than a white man, and a very ill-looking mulatto at that.

"I was perfectly certain, then, that the woman Celia had permanently palmed off her own child in the place of Isabel Horah's dead son. Nor was I surprised at the darkening of his skin, or the coarsening of his

features and form, such changes being not uncommon in the mixed races. Still I made no sign.

"I took leave of my patient and left him in repose. Celia followed me from the room, ostensibly to let me out of the street door. At the foot of the stairs she suddenly passed before me, and turned and confronted me, and said:

" 'Sir, you are Dr. Hawkins, who—who——' Then her voice broke, but presently she faltered forth the question: 'Oh, sir, what are you going to do?'

"I told her that I should do nothing immediately, but ultimately I must do all I could to repair a great injury I had unconsciously had a hand in doing the legal heirs of Horah Hall. Then I left the house.

"At that time I felt a deep compassion for the man who, after having been reared and educated as a gentleman of wealth and rank, must suddenly—by no fault of his own—be hurled down into slavery, deprived not only of rank and wealth, but of personal freedom as well.

"The next day, when I called to see my patient, he was not only free from pain, but quite comfortable, and much disposed to talk, and mostly of his business journey with Murdok Horah down to Horah Hall, and of all his adventures and misadventures in that ill-omened neighborhood, ending with but one small result—his purchase of the woman Celia.

"Now, from the very graphic story of Mr. Marman, I gathered such an idea of the character of this man that much of my sympathy with his painful position passed away. Then I told Marman the truth about the real position of the man, and was very much surprised at the cool manner in which he took my startling news. He merely said:

" 'That explains everything!' But what he was really excited over was the fact that the so-called Murdok Horah had no right to sell him the woman Celia, and

that, therefore, Celia could be replevined by the executor of the Horah estate, and that he should be loser of the amount of one thousand dollars. I intimated to him that his loss might be made good out of the estates, if the executor should see his claim in that light.

"Without taxing your patience by a longer story, my friends, I will just say that the result was that we planned this journey down here, each with a design of his own—mine was to repair the wrong I had had some unconscious part in doing the legal heirs; Marman's, to try to get reimbursement for his losses; and poor Celia, because she could not help herself, and wished to do the best possible under the hard conditions. I have nothing more to say, friends, except that I have no doubt that my old friend and neighbor, Dr. Bland, could corroborate some parts of my story."

"Yes," said the aged physician, "I could, but it is not necessary now."

"No," said Col. Pryor, "not yet; though it may become so."

"It seems to me, gentlemen, that my business here is at an end," said Constable Bowen, looking around in some doubt.

"Quite so," said Col. Pryor. "You are at liberty to withdraw as soon as your please. But you will allow my servants to offer you some refreshments first," he added, his hospitable instincts getting the ascendency.

"No, thank you, colonel. But didn't you tell me a while ago to take that man, there, in custody for disorderly conduct? Shall I take him to Mistyrock and put him in the lockup?" inquired the constable.

"No, sir!" emphatically exclaimed Nat Pryor, who would not have stricken Old Nick himself if he had been the "under dog." "No, sir! I will attend to that man myself."

"Then, good-night, sir. Good-night, gentlemen all. I'll have to catch my train. Come, fellows." This last

remark was addressed to his posse, who all followed him from the room. And in a few minutes the village cart which had brought them was rolling away.

Col. Pryor now turned to the slave trader, and said:

"Mr. Marman, as executor of the Horah estate, I think I may take the responsibility of promising that you shall be reimbursed for all your losses."

"Thank you, sir. I would be very willing to take that fellow, Bull Boker, in place of the woman." said the trader, with a malign look toward the unhappy creature.

"But you cannot have him, sir," sternly responded the colonel.

"Come, Dr. Hawkins. We may as well be going also, may we not?" suggested the trader.

"Yes, I thing so," replied the latter.

"No, I hope not. I should be very glad to have you make The Notches your home while you remain in the neighborhood, Dr. Hawkins," said the colonel, cordially.

"I thank you heartily, my dear colonel; but, in fact, I have to take the night express back to Alexandria and to my patients. I shall be there at your orders by telegram whenever I may be wanted," cordially responded the doctor. And, after shaking hands with his old friend, and bowing to the company, he departed, accompanied by the trader.

When they had gone, and the sound of their carriage wheels had died away, Col. Pryor went to where the once-called Murdok Horah sat in the same attitude of stunned despair, and said:

"Young man"—he could not call him by the name of Horah, and, for pity, he would not call him by the only name to which he had any right, so he addressed him simply: "Young man, I advise you to go over to Horah Hall and await further events there. Your mother will go with you. She is your best and perhaps

your only friend. For, with all her sense of injury, and wrong, and outrage, she is your mother still. And a mother never forgets or ceases to love her own child. Are you listening to me? The carriage that was ordered to take us to the railway station still stands at the door. It shall take you and your mother to Horah Hall. Remain there, in such peace as you possibly can, until you hear from me. Do you understand?" inquired the colonel, looking into his dazed eyes, that were lifted in blank, stupid misery to his face.

No; it was clear that the wretch did not take in one word that was said to him.

Col. Pryor, with a sigh, turned to Celia, and said:

"My poor soul, your sin has found you out. You risked your salvation for an idol that has fallen upon you and bruised you. You are punished enough, Heaven knows. Fear no retribution from me. Go now, and take your son with you to the Hall, and there await events."

"I thank you, sir," murmured the woman, in a broken voice.

And then she arose and went to her son, and said:

"Come; let us go."

But he only gazed on her in an imbecile manner and made no movement, spoke no word.

"I will call in Tim to help you lead him out," said Col. Pryor, as he went to the door and summoned his coachman and told him what was wanted of him.

Tim, who, on his carriage box before the door, had heard nothing of the startling revelations which had dismayed the company in the parlor, and who now believed that he was only called to assist the intoxicated master of Horah Hall into the carriage, and to take him home, went up to the side of the stupefied man, and said, in a coaxing, wheedling tone:

"Come now, Marse Murdok, sah. Come, le' me take yer inter de ca'age, like a good ge'man."

The miserable man submitted to be led away between Celia and Tim, and soon the sound of the carriage wheels was heard as they rolled away toward Horah Hall.

None but the wedding guests now remained in the parlor. But the soul of Nat Pryor was consumed with anxiety for his beloved Zenobia and his son, Oliver. Where had they gone? What had become of them? No one present could tell. But that Zenobia had fled from the appalling presence of Murdok Horah, and that Oliver had gone in pursuit of her, everyone believed.

And now the short winter afternoon was darkening into night.

In the midst of the general anxiety, Oliver suddenly reëntered the house, and blundered, like a blind man, into the parlor, where he sank upon a chair, pale, trembling and panting his ill news:

"I have gone over every foot of the plantation. I have been in every negro's cabin, into the barn, and stable, and kennel—everywhere, and I cannot find her!" he cried, burying his face in his hands.

"No, he could not find her. Zenobia had fled! Filled with unutterable, inconceivable horror of the repulsive brute who had claimed her as his slave, and brought men, warrant and constable to seize her, and carry her away by force of law, Zenobia had snatched one instant when the eyes of all were diverted from her to the dreadful struggle between Oliver and Horah, and had fled from the room, and from the land, calling on the mountains to fall upon her to conceal her from Murdok Horah.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW THE MOUNTAINS COVERED ZENOBIA.

Out into the wintry weather fled Zenobia, too crazed with terror, and frantic with eagerness to escape the unutterable perdition that threatened her, even to think of any covering for her white wedding dress; or, in her transcendent excitement, even to feel conscious of the cold.

The short winter afternoon was already darkening into twilight, as, like a pallid ghost, she flitted over the lawn, through the gate, and across the road into the thicket that clothed the foothills of the mountain range. On and on she scrambled through the pathless wilderness, up the mountain side.

Even in her frenzy no impulse to self-destruction tempted the Christian girl. But she felt she must fly from the Minotaur, at any cost of pain, danger or death. On and on, through brushwood and tempest, torn rocks, up and up to dizzier heights, further and further into wilder fastnesses to wander; her strength at last beginning to fail, and her speed to slacken. Her breathing became labored, her limbs grew heavy, her head dizzy, her heart faint. Still she toiled on a few steps further before she sank to the ground, and rolled down the precipice into a little narrow cleft in the rocks that received her, and stopped her further fall.

Here she lay. Her body was faint unto death and benumbed almost into insensibility, and a coldness gathered about her heart. Yet she was not conscious of suffering. A pleasant lethargy possessed her. She was too weak now for voluntary thought, yet she vaguely felt that she was dying, and feebly hoped she was. It would not be hard to die here in this little bed on the mountain side, that fitted her like a grave, with the

spicy pines and cedar saplings around her, and the starry heavens above her. A sweet, peaceful, delicious sense of repose had stolen over her consciousness, in which all fears, sorrows and anxieties were forgotten; in which she calmly and almost unconsciously watched the darkly brilliant sky overhead, until, with a prayer in her heart, though scarcely in her head, and not on her lips, she calmly closed her eyes and fell asleep.

This sleep might, indeed, have passed into death if it had lasted a little longer. But soon she was tenderly awakened by something like a soft, warm, moist sponge passing over and over her face gently. She opened her eyes, and dimly discerned a white dog standing by her, whom she recognized, vaguely, as "Poor Jack," a mongrel, belonging to the negro Brush, and to whom she had always been very kind, just because he was a poor, despised mongrel, and who had repaid her kindness with such gratitude, affection and utter devotion as few, except dogs, ever feel for their benefactors.

Zenobia did not awake in her proper senses. She could not clearly remember what had passed, or know where she was. She felt only a shadowy reminiscence of some deep misery, out of which she had passed through the gates of death. As she opened her eyes, the dog gave a little yelp of joy, and recommenced to lick her face.

She put up her hand to caress the creature, but let it fall, for her arm was deadly stiff and weak. She panted and tried to speak.

"Poor—Jack! Poor—Jack! Are you dead, too? So glad! So glad! It is nice to be dead! Poor Jack! I knew you had a soul, because you love, and love is soul! Poor Jack!"

She never uttered these words. She only thought them, and panted. Meanwhile, "Poor Jack" licked her face and hands, and pulled and dragged at her dress,

and tried to get her up and away, but utterly failed to move her, as she failed to use her voice.

At length, in wordless, dog despair, he lay down, stretched his paws across her body, lifted his head, fixed his eyes on the heavens above, and opened his mouth in a long wail of anguish. This might have been the dog's instinctive appeal to his Maker, the God of the sparrows. We humans must be very narrow and conceited, if we suppose that we are the only animals who pray and praise, or whose prayers and praises only are heard and blessed.

Was "Poor Jack's" piteous wail answered by an intuition? It seemed so, for suddenly he sprang up, gave his chosen mistress a reassuring lick, and darted away on a run.

Zenobia looked around, still dazed. The heat of the dog's body had partly restored the warmth of her own, and with returning circulation she was beginning to suffer somewhat.

Presently, through the bright starlight, she saw the dog returning up a narrow path through the ragged thicket, and turning his head at short intervals to look at the tall figure of a man who was following him. The dog sprang to her side with a glad yelp, and stood wagging his tail, waiting for the man, who at last came up, stooped over her, and seemed profoundly amazed to see lying there, in the cleft below him, the form of a young girl in an elegant white evening dress, and without any outside covering.

Marvelous as the sight was, he did not stop to ask a question or to speak a word, for he saw that instant action was imperatively necessary. He stooped and raised her in his arms. The grateful dog leaped around him with joyful barks.

A giant in size and strength, the man easily carried the girl down the path along which he and the dog had come, and which now led to a narrow ledge on the

mountain side, from which arose, slanting backward, a wall of gray rock, at the bottom of which was a hole in the shape of an irregular arch, about seven feet in height and three in width.

Through this opening the tall man took the semi-conscious girl into a spacious cavern, the floor, walls and ceiling of which were all of solid, rough rock. In the middle of the floor a smoldering fire was dying out, but its fitful gleams struck sparks here and there from specks on the walls.

The stranger laid Zenobia down on a pile of bear-skins, then got blankets and covered her, and next went around his domain in search of restoratives. "Poor Jack," proud and happy in his success as a rescuer, capered around and around the prostrate girl with glad little yelps, stopping at intervals to lick her face and hands—the "dog's kiss."

The hermit—for such he was—now brought his cordial in a little cup, raised the girl and supported her on one arm, while he put it to her lips. She obediently but automatically swallowed the contents. Then he gently laid her down, tucked her up carefully under the blankets, and went around to the foot of the pallet, drew off her wet, and soiled, and torn, white kid boots, and fine silk stockings, and began to rub her half-frozen feet and ankles with his warm, strong, life-giving hands. After he had kept this up for a few minutes and had restored some heat and vitality to the limbs, he signaled to the dog to come and get under the blankets and lie upon his new mistress' feet, to keep them alive. And "Poor Jack," who could conceive no greater happiness than to lie at his mistress' feet, instantly obeyed. The hermit tucked him up in his new bed, and then passed to the head of the pallet, to rub the cold hands and arms of his patient.

"Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!" murmured Zenobia, faintly and indistinctly.

"Keep quiet, my child, and keep your hands close under the covers," was all that the hermit answered, as he tucked the blanket around her throat.

Now he thought it safe to go to the fire and replenish it with pine cones and knots. It soon shot up a brilliant blaze, that instantly transfigured the dark cavern into an illuminated fairy grotto, with ceiling hung with stalactites that sparkled and gleamed, and flashed in the firelight like diamonds, emeralds and rubies. This fire of balsamic wood diffused a warm, fragrant, reviving aroma throughout the cavern. But where did the smoke go? Up from the fire on the floor, in a thin, spiral, blue column, that wavered but slightly, to some invisible aperture among the stalactites in the ceiling, through which it seemed to be drawn to the outer air.

The hermit now busied himself in preparing some spicy, nutritive, stimulating compound in a little iron saucepan over the fire. When it was ready, he poured it into a rude earthenware bowl and brought it to the girl's side. She was lying still, quiet and obedient, as he had left her.

"See if you can take this, my child," he said, as he seated himself on the floor beside her and raised her on one arm.

Zenobia opened her mouth like a young bird, and he fed her by spoonfuls until the little bowl was empty.

"I thank you, sir. I—thank you," she murmured, gratefully, as he laid her down again.

"I ought—I ought to tell you," she tried to begin, but she was still too weak and confused to marshal her thoughts and put them into words.

"You ought to shut your eyes, and say your prayers, and go to sleep," said the hermit, as he went and put away the empty bowl. When he returned to her he found that she had really fallen into a healthful sleep of weariness.

Again he seated himself beside her, watching her

anxiously, sometimes slipping his fingers under the blankets to feel the temperature of her hands, and, finding them warm, would cover them up again. "Poor Jack" meanwhile lay under the blankets about her feet, cuddling them to his loving heart, warming them with his breath, and sometimes licking them.

When Zenobia awoke again she was somewhat more recovered. Her opening eyes were raised to the ceiling, that seemed composed of the rarest and most precious jewels that sparkled, burned and flashed, filling the scene with rainbow lights. Turning her eyes downward, she saw beside her a figure which might have been that of the magician Merlin, so stately majestic and venerable it was. A fair, handsome face, full of dignity and benevolence, was framed by long, wavering, silver-white hair and beard. She was not yet quite rational, for, looking at this venerable presence, she devoutly crossed herself, and in an awe-stricken tone she inquired:

"Holy sir, are you St. Peter?"

"No, my child," replied the hermit, not mockingly, but gravely.

"Oh, of course not," she murmured to herself. "Of course not. I was not fit to come to heaven at once. I died without absolution, too. Ah, me! Good sir, is this purgatory?" she solemnly inquired.

"I hope not, my child, except in the sense that the whole earth is a purgatory, since it is a place of probation, preparation and purification."

"Where, then, am I? And how came I here?" she murmured, as if questioning herself, rather than any other.

"Drink this strengthening cordial, my child, and then I will tell you."

She now raised herself upon her elbow without as-

sistance, and took the cup and drank its contents, returning it to the giver with a sweet:

"Thank you, sir."

"Now I will tell you where and how I found you," he said.

Then he related to her his side of the strange story. How, while he was sitting at his cavern door, stargazing, the dog had come to him pawing the air, and whining and pulling at his clothing; then running up the path a little way, looking back and barking, and then returning and pulling at him again, thus showing in dog pantomime that he wished to lead him somewhere. How he had got up and followed the dog down to the cleft in which he had found the exhausted girl.

"Oh, I remember now. I remember it all now," she breathed, with a deep sigh. "I remember. I thought I had died there. I thought that was to be my grave, and I did not care. And when Poor Jack came to me, I thought he was dead, too. And I was glad, for then I knew he would not suffer any more. Poor Jack! Dear Jack! He saved my life. And they say dogs have no souls. Murdok Horah has a soul, and Poor Jack has none. Just think of that now. Is not this Poor Jack who is warming my feet?" she inquired.

"Yes, my child."

"Hugging them up with his poor, dear paws close to his breast, and giving them life again?"

"Yes, my child. I could not have put a hot stone to your half-frozen feet, for that might have destroyed them; but the dog's vital heart has restored them."

"Dear Poor Jack! Good Poor Jack! His name is Poor Jack, you know. Not only Jack, but Poor Jack. How strange to find him here on the mountain! But, then, everything is strange, is it not?"

"Yes, my child. But the strangest thing in my experience of life is the finding of a young girl in what I now recognize as a wedding dress and veil, uncon-

scious in the cleft of a rock near the top of the mountain. When you feel well enough, I hope you will explain how you came there, and tell me how I may be able to help you. But do not try to tell me anything until you feel quite able to do so."

"Oh, I am quite able now. And I want to tell you. I feel so sure you will pity and protect me. Well, then, I ran away," said Zenobia, with an ague shake.

"Ran away? My poor child!"

"Yes! yes! All in my wedding gown and veil, just as I stood up to be married. Oh!" she wailed, with a shiver.

"For God's dear sake! From whom did you run away?" demanded the hermit, deeply moved.

"Oh, from him! From him! From him!" exclaimed Zenobia, as shudder after shudder shook her frame.

"From him?" inquired the hermit, thinking of the cruelty of forced marriages. "Do you mean from your bridegroom?"

"From my bridegroom—from my dear, dear, dear Oliver? Oh, no! no! no! We loved one another. We were standing to be married when he came in with men, and warrants, and constables, to—to seize me! And he forbid the marriage and claimed me for his—— Oh, my God! my God! I cannot speak the hateful words!" she cried, with a shudder that shook her whole frame so violently that Poor Jack burst out of the cover, rushed round and round the girl's pallet, and then flew out of the cavern door, barking at the universe, and threatening creation in general. Finally, he came back, licked the hand that Zenobia held out to him, and with every eloquent dog tone and gesture assured her that it was all right, that no one should hurt so much as a hair of her head, and that he had warned the whole world that if anyone should make her afraid, he would tear them limb from limb, and inside out.

"Poor Jack! Poor Jack! If you have no soul, then neither have I. Neither has anybody," said Zenobia, caressing her devoted friend.

"But, my dear child, you have not yet told me who drove you to this desperate step."

"Who?" repeated Zenobia, in a tone of horror. "He! That brute! That devil! Murdok Horah!"

"Ah-h-h-h-h!" responded the hermit, with a long-drawn breath.

"You will protect me against him, sir?" pleaded Zenobia.

"With my life!" exclaimed the hermit. "And at the cost of his if necessary," solemnly declared the hermit.

"Oh, thank you! Bless you! I knew you would! I felt you would!" warmly responded Zenobia, taking the old man's hand and drawing it caressingly to her face.

"And now, my poor child," said the hermit, touched by her gratitude, helplessness and dependence, "I wish you to be more explicit and give me more particulars about yourself, your name, and the names of your friends, and upon what possible ground this hellhound, Horah, came to claim you?"

"But ought you not to go to rest, sir? Have I not wearied you too much already?" anxiously inquired Zenobia, ever thoughtful of others.

The hermit laughed a little as he replied:

"My child, I have spent whole nights on the mountain top, unwilling to lose an hour of the beauty and glory of the peaceful earth and the starry heavens, and felt no sign of fatigue. You have now had a long, refreshing sleep, and so, if you are equal to telling the story, I am anxious to hear it."

Thus assured, Zenobia told her little life history so far as she, herself, knew it, the old man only interjecting an occasional "Oh!" or "Ah!" as she went on.

After she had concluded, he remained silent for a few moments, and then said:

"I know all these people whom you have mentioned, but I know them only by reputation. I remember the wreck of the *Errand Girl* and the newspaper report of the rescue of the little Spanish child by the poor, young slave woman. Well, my child, be comforted. You shall be saved from him. I say it."

"I thank and bless you, with all my heart and soul!" fervently exclaimed Zenobia.

"But, oh, sir," she added, "my heart aches for those I left behind, left in ignorance of my fate. Not one of them knows what has become of me. No creature saw me when I slipped out of the back door and over the lawn. I took care against that. They must be so anxious, sir. Oh, they must be so anxious! Yes, if I venture to go back"—she paused and turned pale—"if I show myself anywhere——"

"I understand. The Minotaur will grab you. But, fear nothing. I will go to The Notches and set the minds of your friends at rest," said the hermit.

"Oh, will you, sir—will you? Oh! how good you are! How heavenly good!" earnestly answered the girl.

"How you exaggerate a bounden duty into a merit, my child. I shall set off by sunrise on this duty," said the hermit, with the little laugh she had heard before.

"Oh, bless you! bless you! bless you! Is it far you will have to go?"

"No, my child. Only a few miles."

"A few miles! Oh, but you will ride?"

Again the little, inward laugh as the old man answered:

"Dear child, there is scarcely a footway or bridle path on this wild mountain that I have not walked over many times. A few miles are nothing to me. My long, strong limbs could go twice the distance if necessary."

"Bless you again and again!" ejaculated Zenobia, as

if she could not bless her benefactor too often or too earnestly.

"It is near day. Can you go to sleep again? The more you sleep, the better," said the hermit.

"Oh, no! no! no! I am wide awake! I am ready to rise!" exclaimed the girl, throwing off the blankets and standing up in her crumpled wedding dress.

The strange old man went off to the rear of his cavern, where a rude wooden bench stood against the rocky wall. On it was a stone pitcher and a tin wash basin, which were covered over with a rough, coarse towel. He busied himself among these articles for a few minutes, and then called to Zenobia, saying:

"Here, my child! Here you can bathe your face and refresh yourself."

Zenobia willingly availed herself of the convenience.

The hermit went to a pile of resinous pine cones, and took an armful, which he threw on the fire. Then he began to prepare breakfast for his guest and himself. It was a very simple meal of coffee, bread and stewed dried peaches. When it was ready, he placed it on a rude, little pine table, and drew up two three-legged stools, and invited her to sit down and partake.

Zenobia thanked him, drank some coffee, but could eat nothing. It was not yet sunrise when the repast was finished, then the old man got up to prepare for his long walk. He put on an overcoat of bearskin, and a cap and gloves of fox skin, and took a stout mountain staff, and finally went to the rear of the cavern, where he vanished so suddenly and mysteriously through what seemed to be a solid wall of rock that Zenobia was seized with a thrill of superstitious fear.

Next she heard a smothered murmur of voices, but saw no one, and no outlet. Presently the hermit reappeared as suddenly and mysteriously as he had vanished, and said to her:

"My good child, an old woman will come to you

presently, who will attend to your wants, and will furnish you with a suit of clothes, which, if not as fine as your present dress, will be more comfortable. She will take care of you until I return. And when I do I will bring any comforts you may require from your home."

"Oh, thank you! I want nothing, but to let my dear friends know that I am safe, and to hear from them," gratefully replied the girl, but still wondering how the hermit contrived to pass through the solid wall.

"Then I will bring you what your friends think you will want during your sojourn here. Good-by for a few hours, my dear child."

"Good-by. Oh, may Heaven reward you, sir!" fervently exclaimed Zenobia.

"Thank you, my dear. Good-by, once more," said the hermit, as, staff in hand, he passed out of the cavern door just as the first beams of the rising sun struck the pine saplings along the mountain side, transmitting them into gold.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FUGITIVES.

> Fields are full of eyes and woods of ears;
> For this the wise are ever on their guard;
> For unforeseen, be sure, is unprepared.—DRYDEN.

As soon as Zenobia found herself alone in the cavern, she remembered that she had not yet offered up her usual morning devotions—thanksgivings, now deeply felt for present deliverance, and supplications for future protection.

The morning sunshine was streaming in through the open mouth of the cavern. Thither she went to kneel and pray, but paused and stood transfixed with admiration of the magnificence of the expanse spread out before her! the most overwhelming beauty and glory of the sunlit heavens and earth!

This cavern was in the heart of one of the highest ranges of the Alleghanies. Zenobia stood upon a narrow ledge of rock on which it opened. Behind her towered heights upon heights invading the deep blue sky, partly clothed in evergreen bushes, partly veiled with silver mist. But she was not looking at them; she was gazing down the frightful precipice on the brink of which she stood, to the foothills below, among which the great, bare forest trees seemed to dwindle into shrubs; and over the beautiful valleys, undulating with hill and dale, varigated with woods and waters; and on to the distant horizon to the line of the Blue Ridge—now intensely blue with its summit crowned with opaline clouds from which the morning sun had risen.

Only a few moments did she stand amazed, and then she sank on her knees in an accession of adoration to

lift her soul "From Nature up to Nature's God."

When these orisons were over, she arose and re-entered the cavern and found herself confronted by an old negro woman in a red woollen gown, white apron and plaid turban.

"Why, Cindy!" exclaimed Zenobia, in great astonishment.

"Lor' Almightly, Miss Snowby! Dis yerse'f?" exclaimed the woman, in equal amazement.

"Cindy, how did you come here? Where are the other poor things?" demanded the girl, to breathless excitement.

"All here, honey! All 'cept 'tis B'ush. He done 'loped off ter de debbil's icy peak sumwhurze!"

"Oh, Cindy, Cindy! I am so glad to see you! you dear old Cindy! We were all afraid that you had perished in the snowstorms! And everybody said you had all vanished so suddenly that it seemed as if the earth had opened and swallowed you!"

"So it did, honey! So de yearf did! Dat's jis' w'at happened! De yearf did swaller us, an' here we is safe in de bowels of de yearf! But how you come yere, chile? How yer come yerse'f? Did yer yun 'way f'om dat man debbil, yerse'f?" inquired the woman, in deep interest.

Zenobia hesitated. She did not wish to enter into particulars regarding her flight, and hear all the exclamations that Cindy would make, so she simply said:

"I got lost in the mountains and Poor Jack found me."

"Dere, now! how of'en has I tole yer 'bout walkin' 'bout by yerse'f? Well, Lor', how foolish young gals is, ter be sure! Fader Ab'aham—dat's w'at I calls him, dough de odder darkies call him de Hermit ob de Hill, an' de Ole Man ob de Mountains, an' sich! But I calls him jes' Fader Ab'aham! Well, he come ter de hole w'ere I wer' sleep an' he rapped till he wake me an' he

say—Fader Ab'aham did: 'Cindy, dere's a youn' lady in de cave w'at wants lookin' arter, an' yer'll kno' w'at ter do fer her better'n I kin tell yer, but she'll want a new suit ob clo's,' Fader Ab'aham say, an' 'way he went an' nebber as much tell me who it war! An' it's yo! Well, Lor'! An' honey, dere's de clo's on dat dere stool! A good warm pai' ob canton f'annel de-aws an' oder fixin's, an' linsey-woolsey petticoat, an' a merino dress. Not fine, honey, but clean as clean kin be! Better'n w'at yer got on, I finks! Good Lor'! Look at dat sating gown an' lace weil, an' dem arterficials! Well, well, well, I nebber! Shill I he'p yer ter dress, honey?"

"If you please, Aunt Cindy!" said Zenobia, and, pushing the three-legged stool against the wall of the cavern, she sat down and leaned back, for though she was in a degree recovered from her nervous shock and severe exposure, she still felt some of their effects in physical weakness and weariness.

Cindy began tenderly to take off her gown, commenting as she went on with her work:

"Wunner you hadn' friz ter deaf! 'tis, indeed! W'at's dis yere yer's got unner yer dress?"

"Oh! It is a chamois-skin jacket that Jemima would make me put on yesterday because she said that I would need it later when we should start on our journey in this cold weather."

"Was yer gwine on a journey, honey? In dat dress!" exclaimed Cindy, in wide-eyed astonishment.

"Oh, no! I should have changed the gown," replied Zenobia; and then, to avoid being questioned further by Cindy, she began on her side to put inquiries in which she felt deeply interested.

"How came you to find shelter here, Cindy?"

"'Long ob Fader Ab'aham? Well, I'll tell yer, honey! Of course, honey, yer mus' 'a' heard 'bout us runnin' 'way offen de ole Horah place?"

"Yes, certainly!"

"Well honey! jes yer wait til' I tie dis skeert on yer, an' den I'll tell yer all 'bout it! I yeckon yer better keep on dis shammy skin, hadn' yer?"

"Yes, Aunt Cindy."

"Dis yere war w'at keeped yer f'om f'eezin' out inter de cole las' night, fer sartin sure!"

"I reckon it did, aunty!"

"I kno's it! Yer'd done been dead as a do'nail, hadn' been fer dis yere shammy!"

"And dear Poor Jack! The chamois underjacket could not have kept me alive long!"

"Well, not forebber!"

"Now, aunty, tell me how you came to be sheltered here."

"Jes' yer wait, honey, til' I gits dis yere merino dress ober yer head! I nebber kin work an' talk ter enny wantage at de same time. Now, den, honey," she said, when she had inducted the girl into a blue gown that fitted her like a bag, "I'll tell yer ebberyfing! Hem-m-m! Dat night w'en we runned 'way f'om ole Horah, we took ebberyfing ob our'n as we could tote! Wittles an' close an' beddin', an' pots an' kettles an' all! An' de men an' boys carried de biggest bundles. An' de wimmin an' gals carried de little chillun. We was makin' fer ter cross de mountains an' git 'long te'ard Pennsylwany! It was pitch-dark w'en we 'gan ter clime de side ob de mountains, an' dere want no paff, an' ef dere war we couldn't fin' none! An' de chillun 'gan ter cry, an' de wimmin gin out, an' de men' gan ter git disincouridged. An' a snowstorm com'd up wid a high win'—a dreadful cole win'! I kno'd as dere war some caves sumwhurze in de mount'ins, case I hearn ob it all my life, w'ich de ta'k ob it kummed down f'om mudder ter darter fer ginerations, an' likewise f'om fader ter son! An' ob late years we hearn tell ob a ole man w'at libbed in dem dere caves. An' sum say as how he wer' a holy saint, an' udders hab it as how he

wer' no better'n a witch man! As fer me, I nebber paid no 'tention ter sich foolishness! But I did b'lieve in de caves."

"Yes, we all have heard the rumor of the existence of the caves in the mountain, but they were supposed to be dangerous, if not inaccessible, of approach. And yet here is one, at least."

"More'n one! Ebber so many ob dem, honey! Whole string ob 'em. But now I gwine tell yer how we foun' Fader Ab'aham, or how he foun' us."

"Yes!" eagerly exclaimed Zenobia.

"Well, honey, we were up yere on de mount'in side in dis wild'ness ob rocks an' sc'ub trees. It wer' dark as de pit itse'f. An' cole as ice! An' snowin' so, an blowin' so, as we didn't know wedder we'd be blowed offen de mount'in down ter 'struction below, or buried alibe inter de snow w'ere we were. An' 'stead ob 'callin' on ter de Lor' God, who could he'p us, eberybody groaned. Eberybody blamed eberybody else fer 'suadin' ob dem ter run 'way! An' nuff ter make 'em c'azy! An' de chillun wer' cryin', an' de wimmin wer' scoldin' an' de men a-cussin' 'nouf ter riz' de ha'r offen yer head! An' de win' yellin' like ebery rock wer' a roarin' lion! An' de snow a-tumblin' down on us! Oh, Lor'! will I ebber fergit dat night? Dough we didn' call on de Lor' in our mis'y, He sent us help in His mercy! Jis' as we were 'bout ter gib up an' die, we t'ought we heard a woice, but de roarin' ob de sto'm were so dreadful t'rough de rocks an' trees dat we couldn' be sartin. But p'esently in a little lull like w'en de sto'm debbil stop ter kech his breaf, we hearn de woice ag'in. It say:

"W'ats de matter yere? Who is yer? W'at had hap'n'd ter yer?' Ben B'ush up an' say:

" 'Oh, marser, who ebber yer is, p'ease fer de Lor' Gor' Ami'ty sake help us!' By dat time de ole man wer' right inter de midst ob us, dough we couldn't hardly see in de dark an' de fallin' snow, nor likewise

hear in de roarin' win' w'ich kept yisin', but he axed:

"'Is yer emig'ans?' or sumfin like dat. We didn' kno' w'at dat mean, but leas'ways, we kno'd we wa'n't dat, an' we say so. Den he axed:

"'Is yer fug'tives?'

"'No, sah!' we say ter him. 'We is cullud people.'

"'Come 'long ob me,' he say; 'keep low down close ter de groun'!' he say; 'keep f'om de bwink! Keep clos' ter de rock! Better git down on yer han's an' knees an crawl,' he say. An' so we done. An' we follered arter him all on all fours jis like sheep arter de shepherd. An' much as we could do ter kweep 'long wiv de chillun slung ober our backs. We had ter leabe mos' ob our fings out dere in de snow. We couldn't sabe dem an' our libes at de same time. Well, he fe'ch us crawlin' an' creepin' till he brung us ter dis yere cave, an' tole us ter sit down. An' he piled loads an' loads ob bresh an' wood onto de fire in de middle ob de place an' we soon got thawed out. Den he made a big pot o' corn meal an' gib us all a supper ob corn meal mush an' 'lasses. It took mos' all night fer ter dry our clo's. Dey wer' all we could fetch ter de cave, an' de pots an' kettles an' sich wer' lef' out in de snow. Den Fader Ab'aham he sho'd us inter de inside ob de in'ermos' caves, w'ere he tell us ter lay down an' go ter s'eep. Well, honey, we's b'en hangin' on ebber since, all 'cept B'ush, who 'loped 'way an' lef' Poor Jack yere!'

Poor Jack, on hearing his name, rose from the spot where he lay and came and fondled Zenobia, who returned his caresses while she inquired of Cindy:

"Didn't the hermit know that you had escaped from Horah Hall?"

"Lor'! yes, honey! Next day I tole him all 'bout it. An' he kno'd all 'bout de Horahs! All 'bout dem! An' he said he'd 'tect us ter de bes' ob his 'bility. An' so he has, honey!"

"But how could he feed so many of you?"

"Lor', honey! we feeded ourse'ves! De men went out at night coon huntin' an' sich, an' sumtimes dey fe'ched chickens an' bags ob corn! Dunno we're dey git dem f'om! Ennyways, we wimmin beat it inter hominy an' b'iled it. Yes, honey! w'en de storm wer' ober an' de snow melted, we went an' s'arch'd fer our cookin' 'tensils an' foun' dem, an' fe'ch dem home, dat is yere, where we has all de home we's got."

"And what are your future prospects?" sorrowfully inquired Zenobia.

"W'at dat you say, honey?" asked Cindy, scratching her ear with a puzzled look.

"What are you going to do next?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the negress, with sudden intelligence, "we gwine ter 'lope 'way ter Pennsylwany or sum odder furrin' country, one by one, or two at a time! An', now, honey, would yer mine de po' fings comin' in yere where it is light? Dey mos' in gineral stays in yere in de daytime."

"Of course I should not! I should like to see them!" heartily responded Zenobia.

"An' yer won't 'form agin' us?"

"Cindy!"

"Oh, I knowed yer wouldn', honey! I knows it! I'll go an' fe'ch dem!"

The woman then went back to the rear caves, and soon returned, followed by a crowd of negroes, men, women and children, who all greeted Zenobia with the gushing enthusiasm of the race, for they loved her and trusted her as Cindy did.

They had heard the woman's explanation of the young girl's presence among them, but though they did not contradict it, they instinctively believed that she had some cause to run away from Mordok Horah.

CHAPTER XXV.

LOVE'S DESPAIR.

None of the guests who had been invited to the hapless wedding left The Notches that night. They were all intimate and devoted friends of the Pryors, and could not think of deserting them in this time of their intense anxiety for the fate of their beloved Zenobia.

As soon as the exhausted and despairing Oliver had described his fruitless search throughout the negro quarters and all over the plantation, and declared his total failure to find or hear of her anywhere, the gentlemen of the party, headed by Gilbert Godfrey, determined to organize a more extensive search in the woods and hills of the surrounding country.

While they were preparing for the expedition, Col. Pryor went over to the old armchair into which Oliver had sunk in a state of collapse, and, bending over him, told him of the sudden appearance of Dr. Hawkins at The Notches that evening, and of his astounding revelation that exposed the criminal fraud of the quadroon nurse Celia, in the substitution of her own son for the dead child of her mistress, and which proved the man called Murdok Horah had no right to that name—was not the son of the late Murdok Horah and his wife, Isabel, was not the master of Horah Hall, but was Bullard Boker, the son of Celia Boker, both slaves, and the property of the Horah estate.

Poor Oliver was too deeply absorbed in anxiety for his lost bride to feel as much astonishment or take as profound an interest in this startling communication as under other circumstances he must have done. He answered, moodily:

"I do not wonder! All the white Horahs looked like quadroons, and this monster, as he grew up to man-

hood, looked every year more and more like a mulatto, and not a respectable one, either. I am glad that he is struck harmless by this blow. It saves me from the sin of killing him, as I certainly should have done for her dear sake, even if the deed should have cost me my life and soul!"

"Lead us not into temptation!" devoutly responded the colonel, bowing his gray head.

When the men returned to the parlor, heavily clothed, and bearing lanterns for their night expedition, Oliver started up to prepare to accompany them.

"Sit still—sit still, my boy. You are not fit to go out again to-night," said the colonel, laying his hand authoritatively on the shoulder of his son.

"Succumb to the weakness of fatigue and rest here while she is in danger? Oh, no, my father! I could not do that!" exclaimed the young man, rising to leave the room, though he tottered as he walked.

"One minute! One minute! Just wait one minute for me! I will keep you no longer!" exclaimed Jemima, as she flew out of the parlor.

She went straight to the old dining room where the luckless wedding feast had been spread, and through to the kitchen, where the coffee and chocolate had been standing for hours. She called Tim, Druse and Otto, and had them place these refreshments, with all else that was necessary, on trays, and carry them to the parlor.

"You must fortify yourselves for your tramp. None of this is so good as if it had been made fresh, but you cannot, of course, wait, and this is better than nothing," she said, as she had the trays placed on the center table, and invited them by a gesture to draw near.

The men were glad of the hot beverages and of the more substantial condiments, and proceeded to "fortify" themselves accordingly.

Oliver could not eat a morsel, but at his father's

earnest entreaty he drank a cup of strong coffee. A few minutes later the party set out on their quest.

Col. Pryor was the only man who remained at home with the women of the party. How that night of weary waiting passed need not be described. Col. Pryor walked restlessly, incessantly, up and down the floor of the long parlor. The women gathered in little groups on the sofas, talking in subdued voices. All were covertly listening for any sound from outside that might indicate the return of the search party or any member of it.

So the long and anxious night passed. It was some hours after midnight when Col. Pryor walked up to his niece, where she was sitting on the long sofa between Mrs. Melville and the Misses Kent, and said to her:

"Jim, my dear, there is nothing like employment to relieve the suspense of waiting. If our dear friends will excuse you, go into the kitchen and order Druse to begin to prepare breakfast—her very best breakfast—for the gentlemen who may now return at any moment and will need refreshment.

Jemima gladly hurried away to attend to this duty.

But still they waited long. Breakfast was ready, but no one came.

It was, in fact, about an hour after sunrise when the search party began to return; by one, two, or three at a time, for they had scattered, some going in one direction, some in another, and a third division piercing much further afield than the others. Yet none brought any news of the lost Zenobia.

Oliver was half frantic with anguish and despair. It was worse than useless for his father or friends to try to comfort or encourage him.

"If any fatal evil had happened to the child we should have discovered it. There is no lake, river or pit into which she could have fallen, so she must have gone into some house. We have not inquired at every house

in the neighborhood, you know," suggested the Rev. Mr. Melville.

"Yes! yes! We shall hear news of her before the day is over," added Dr. Bland.

"Why, of course. Of course we shall," chimed in all the others.

But, ah, they scarcely believed their own prognostications, which had no effect on Oliver, who either sat with his head buried in his hands, or else started up and tramped up and down the floor. But the prophets were not so false as they feared.

It was not more than ten o'clock when Gilbert Godfrey, standing at the front window, suddenly inquired:

"What strange figure of a man is that approaching the house? If he be not the Wandering Jew, I would like to know who he may be!"

Col. Pryor and all the men except the distracted Oliver hastened to the windows to look out.

They saw a very tall, broad-shouldered, erect old man, clothed in coarse furs from head to heels, and having long, silken, white hair and beard, which fell down upon his shoulders and chest, and supporting himself with a stout staff which he seemed scarcely to need.

"I know him," said the colonel. "That is, I know something of him. A very gifted and most remarkable man, who lives alone on the mountains somewhere. Nothing but a matter of the greatest importance could have brought him forth from his retreat."

"Oh, he brings news of Zenobia!" wildly exclaimed Oliver, dashing out of the parlor, tearing open the front door and almost precipitating himself upon the old man, who raised his hands in deprecation and said, hastily:

"Yes! yes! yes! She is safe! Quite safe!"

Oliver had not spoken a word to the hermit, yet the latter had divined at sight that this was the anxious lover to whom he was the bearer of glad tidings.

"Oh, thank God! thank God! thanks be to God!" fervently exclaimed Oliver. Then, hastily: "Where is she? Oh! where is she?"

"In my cavern home, well attended, well cared for, quite comfortable!" said the hermit.

"God bless you! God bless you, sir!" exclaimed the young man.

But now Col. Pryor appeared upon the scene.

"We owe you eternal gratitude, sir, for the news you bring, and for the priceless service you have done us in saving our child! Come in, sir! Come in, and receive the thanks of all her friends!" he said, as he warmly shook the fur-gloved, bearlike hand of the old hermit. And they went into the house.

"By what name shall I announce our benefactor to our friends?" inquired the colonel.

"Emanuel Paschal," replied the hermit.

"Mine is Pryor."

The hermit bowed.

They entered the parlor, where the colonel introduced the stranger to the company.

Then, when the latter was comfortably seated in a large armchair before the fire, and had been refreshed with a silver tankard filled to the brim with hot spiced mulled cider, he related to the company his strange adventure of finding the young girl in her bridal dress, lying semi-conscious in what might have been her grave; giving all the credit to the faithful, intelligent, little mongrel who had led him to the spot.

"And now, Col. Pryor, I place the fate of this young girl in your hands, with this explanation—that I am both willing and anxious to shelter and protect her against the brute who has dared to claim her as his slave!" said the hermit, in conclusion of his narrative.

"The man who insulted us all by such a claim is powerless to hurt our dear girl. And now, sir, I have

a story to tell which I think will match yours for strangeness," said Col. Pryor.

And while the hermit gave him the most interested attention, he related the startling revelation that had been made by Dr. Hawkins on the preceding afternoon, which had branded the so-called Murdok Horah as a mulatto and a slave.

"Under the circumstances, you perceive, sir, no possible annoyance or inconvenience can attend the return of Miss de Leon to her home," said the colonel, in conclusion.

"De Leon!" murmured the hermit, musingly; "that is a noble Spanish name of great antiquity. "Did you ever succeed in tracing her family?"

"Never! We kept up the quest by advertisements for years after the rescue of the child, but as nothing came of it, we abandoned the search and took the beautiful orphan to our hearts as our own child," replied the colonel.

"She could not have met a better fortune, I am sure," declared the hermit.

"And yet, in view of the unexpected insult put upon us all by that miscreant yesterday, and which might have ended fatally to our dear child, I would now give all I am worth to identify her family and silence once for all any possible future caviler," sighed the colonel.

"Why not go and see the Spanish minister at Washington? The De Leons are a family of so much importance that the minister must know something of them," said the hermit.

"I thank you, sir, for your suggestions. I shall act upon it at once. But the first thing to be done is to bring our darling home and relieve her mind from all fear by telling her of the fate that has overtaken her persecutor."

"Then, sir, if you will lend me a sure-footed little donkey—if you have such an animal—I will take him

into the mountains, and lead the young girl safely home on him," said the hermit.

"By no means, sir! We could not think of putting you to such trouble. I will order a carriage, and if you will kindly instruct us as to the roads, I will send my son, Oliver, to fetch his bride."

"My dear sir, no carriage could come within a mile of my retreat."

"A lady's saddle horse, then, and another for Oliver?"

"They would scarcely do, sir. One sure-footed little donkey would be best. It is the only way to ride through that rugged wilderness of rocks and thorns. And, gentlemen, I must lead the donkey. For, my friends," said the old man, rising with a dignity he could so easily command, "I hope you will not think me discourteous when I am forced to remind you that my cavern is indeed a hermitage which opens itself only to those in deadly need. Its situation is a secret that I wish to remain a secret. If it were known to one or two here, it would soon be talked about, and would become a place of resort for tourists, and its master an object of curiosity!

"'My solitude be solitude no more,
But peopled with the furies!'

Col. Pryor and gentlemen, I hope you understand my feelings and will pardon me," he continued.

"I do, sir, understand and respect them. It shall be as you wish, sir," gravely replied the colonel.

Then he rang a bell, which brought Tim to his presence. To him he gave the order to have Pounder, the brown donkey, saddled and brought to the door for the use of Mr. Paschal.

The negro went away much exercised in mind as to the Old Man of the Mountains, who was said by some to be a saint; by others, to be a wicked wizard. But

that he had found and rescued "Miss Snowby" he had heard by listening at the door.

"Mr. Paschal, is there no point where I may meet you on your return with my betrothed? Must I wait for her here in this house?" pleaded Oliver.

"Oh, no, my dear young gentleman. You may come to the crossroads where the east fork goes to Mistyrock and the west to Horah Hall. You may wait for me there," amiably replied the hermit.

"And how soon will you be there, sir, if you will pardon my inquisitiveness?"

"In about three hours after I leave here, my dear young friend."

"And I hope, sir, that when you return you will do us the honor and give us the pleasure of your company to dinner, and stay for the night, and as long after as you may find it pleasant and convenient to yourself" said Col. Pryor, with pressing hospitality.

"I thank you, sir. If ever I could be tempted to break my rule of never eating or sleeping away from my mountain hermitage, it would be on this occasion. But, sir, you will kindly excuse me, I know," said the hermit.

Col. Pryor bowed gravely in silence.

Tim came in and announced the donkey.

"Zenobia should have some wraps to return in," exclaimed Jemima, with sudden recollection. "Please wait a moment, sir." And she flew out of the room, and soon returned, bringing a fur-lined, silk cloak, hood and overshoes.

"Could you, sir, without inconvenience, take these along with you?" she inquired, deprecatingly.

"Why, certainly. Nothing easier. I can just make a bundle of the things and carry them before me on the shoulders of the little beast," the hermit replied, good-naturedly.

Jemima thanked him warmly.

Then the Old Man of the Mountains took leave of the company and departed.

Paschal's refusal to accept companionship on his way back to his cavern was not based only on his determination to keep the location of his retreat secret, but also on his desire to guard the retreat of his poor protégés, the fugitives.

He jogged on until he reached the thicket that clothed the foothills of the mountain range. Then he dismounted, to lead the donkey through the pathless labyrinth that finally conducted him to his secret hiding place.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GOOD NEWS.

Believe it, joy never feasts so high,
As when its first course is of misery.—SUCKLING.

"Joy, my child! Joy!" he exclaimed, as he led his little beast up to the door of the cavern at which Zenobia stood, anxiously looking out for him.

She clasped her hands and gazed at him in speechless eagerness to hear more.

He left the donkey to nibble at the low evergreens that grew in the crevices of the rocks about the cavern entrance, and went in, carrying his bundle, and sat down on the table, while he said:

"Be happy, my child. You have nothing more to fear from your persecutor."

She turned red and white in quick succession, and gasped for breath.

"Compose yourself, Murdok Horah will never trouble you or anyone else again."

"My God! Oliver has killed him! Oh, it was what I feared!" she cried, reeling as if about to faint.

"Not at all! Noh at all! He is alive! Oliver hasn't touched him! Steady yourself, my child! I will explain," said the hermit, himself somewhat agitated by the state into which his communication had thrown Zenobia.

The girl sank down on a pile of skins and leaned against the wall while he told her of the revelations that had been made by Dr. Hawkins, and the confessions of Celia, all exposing her would-be master as a slave himself.

Zenobia listened in wide-eyed amazement, though in

words she expressed neither surprise nor wonder, but made the essentially feminine comment:

"That is why Celia adored him so!"

"But where is Cindy?" inquired the hermit. "I left you in her charge."

"She has been with me all the morning. So have the others. They knew I would never betray them. But a minute before you came they thought they heard horses' hoofs, and as they knew you had gone on foot, they feared the approach of some enemy, and hurried away to the rear caves."

"Well, my darling, I shall be sorry to lose the light of your countenance in this gloomy cavern; but as your friends are anxiously expecting you, and as you, no doubt, are equally anxious to hasten to them, I will leave you here to prepare for your donkey ride, and go and tell these poor wretches that the tyrant is deposed," said Paschal, as he went to the rear wall and disappeared.

Zenobia untied her bundle and began to prepare herself for the journey, but she had scarcely finished buttoning her cloak before there came a joyous burst of voices and footsteps from the rear, and a crowd of negroes rushed in, all talking and laughing and rejoicing together.

"Oh, Miss Snowby!" exclaimed Cindy, "t'ank de Lor'! So glad! Did 'spec' as how sumbody'd kill dat man sum ob dese days! So glad he's on'y 'umbled! Now, I reckon as we'll all go back! We ain't 'feared ob Marse Co'n'l P'or! An' he's our marse now, case he's de execushun ob de 'state! Yo' tell Marse Col'n'l we's cumin' back."

"No," said Paschal, "nothing must be said at present. These people must have time to deliberate on their future. If they all deside to return, I will lead them back by night. If any wish to go away, I will see to their departure before I take the others home."

"Now, Lor'! Marse Fader Ab'aham! It's well 'nouf fer de strong men like B'ush ter 'lope 'way ter furrin parts, but we ole people, we doane wan' ter be knockin' 'bout de worl'. An' now dat de mighty's fallin', we'd rudder go home!"

"You will think it over. In the meantime, we must get back to The Notches, my dear child," said Paschal.

Zenobia took leave of all her humble friends and let the hermit set her upon the donkey, and then take the bridle and lead him. So they left the ledge. Poor Jack following closely and the negroes looking after them.

It was quite late in the afternoon when they reached the crossroads where Oliver had engaged to meet them. And there they found him waiting.

The meeting between the lovers need not be described. Both were overcome by their emotions.

Paschal withdrew to a little distance, but when, at length, the agitation attending their first greetings had subsided, the hermit came up to them and said:

"Now, my young friends, I will bid you good-bye, with my best wishes for your welfare and happiness." And he held out a hand to each.

In vain they pleaded with him to accompany them home. He excused himself. Then Oliver would have pressed upon him the use of the donkey, and, to save him the inconvenience of returning it, would have forced it upon him as a gift. But Paschal firmly though courteously declined both offers.

So they parted with mutual good wishes; and Paschal, staff in hand, went his way. Poor Jack looked regretfully after his departing friend, and then turned and followed his adopted and adored mistress.

It was but a short distance between the crossroads and The Notches, as Oliver walked, leading the donkey, until Zenobia said:

"Take me down, Noll. I would rather go on foot, and

let this poor little beast trot home before us. He has had work enough for one day."

"Always considerate, Zena, dearest!" said the young man, as he lifted her off the saddle, stood her on her feet and placed her arm under his own.

The donkey brayed for joy at the relief, and cantered along cheerfully before them.

It was sunset when the lovers reached the house. Though the evening was chilly, the front door stood hospitably open, and all the company was gathered in the front passage to welcome them.

Col. Pryor opened wide his arms and clasped his recovered treasure close to his breast—strong old man as he was, shedding tears of joy.

"Now, Jim," he said, when all the other greetings and congratulations were over, "take her up to her room to be refreshed, and then we will have tea. And after that we will finish the interrupted ceremonies of last evening. I am sorry Mr. Paschal would not come home with you and grace our festivities. But then, we cannot have everything we want in this imperfect world," he concluded, as Jemima carried off her restored companion.

Poor Jack broke away from the ladies and gentlemen, who were making a hero of him, and followed his mistress upstairs. How could he tell what might happen to her if she got out of his sight?

In the bedroom, while she was changing her dress, Zenobia entered more into the details of her night's adventure on the mountains. And Jemima gave full particulars of the scene of dismay that followed her flight.

So, the girls having exchanged mutual confidences, and Zenobia having arranged her dress, they went downstairs together and entered the parlor, where the tea table awaited them. All the family friends were there. They had stayed overnight, in sympathy with

the family anxiety, and to give what help they could under the circumstances. After the news of Zenobia's discovery and rescue had come, they would have taken their leave and gone, but Col. Pryor had earnestly implored them to stay until the girl should really arrive at the house, when, he declared, the interrupted marriage ceremony should be resumed, or, rather, recommenced, and they should be the witnesses.

Under this persuasion they all, with the exception of two, consented to remain for the day. These two were Dr. Bland, who was obliged to go on his daily professional rounds, and Mr. Clement Kent, who had his office business to look after; and even these promised to return to tea. And here they were now. They came up and warmly congratulated Zenobia on her return, and they gave poor Jack the honor due.

After tea, Col. Pryor came up to the sofa on which Oliver and Zenobia were sitting side by side. Oliver was talking in a low and earnest tone, apparently urging some measure upon her, at which she was gravely, sadly, silently shaking her head.

"Father!" exclaimed Oliver, in a tone of despair, as his father came up. "Speak to her. She breaks my heart!"

"What is this, my love?" inquired Col. Pryor, as he took a seat on the other side of Zenobia. "Some lover's quarrel? What has Noll been doing?"

"My dear Oliver has done nothing—never will do anything but what is good, noble and generous. But, my dear guardian, I cannot marry him now," she said.

"Not marry Noll now! Why, my dear child, what whim is this? So unlike your sensible self! Why, Zenobia, the Rev. Mr. Melville has remained here all this time for the express purpose of having the happiness of pronouncing the nuptial benediction on you, of which he was disappointed yesterday. And all these friends have stayed for the pleasure of witnessing the

ceremony. What do you mean by saying that you cannot marry Oliver now?"

"My dear guardian, my more than kind father," she began, with a sort of woeful steadfastness in tone and manner, "I mean that I ought not, and will not, marry Oliver while a cloud of uncertainty rests upon my family connections, and my social position. The terrible shock of yesterday afternoon, while it nearly killed me, taught me a sharp and a lasting lesson. Who could have ever foreseen that any such claim as that of last night—which only the indefiniteness of my birth and position could have rendered possible—could ever have been made upon me?"

"Zenobia, my dear child!"

"My love, my darling!"

The two men began to speak at the same moment, but she raised her hands to stop them, saying:

"Dear ones, hear me out! As no one could have foreseen the shock of shame that fell yesterday, so no one can know what mortifications, what humiliations may not await me in the future. When they come—if they come—I must meet and endure them alone. Oliver must not, shall not, share them."

"Zenobia! Oh, Zenobia! Here are all our friends. Will you call them into counsel? Will you hear their opinion? I am as sure as that I live they will agree with my father and me. Will you be guided by their opinion?" pleaded Oliver.

"No," firmly replied the girl. "No. I have consulted my own heart and your happiness, Oliver. I will take no other counsel."

"Zenobia!" he cried, in a voice of anguish. "Do you love me at all? Did you ever love me, Zenobia?"

"Oh, Oliver! Oliver! You know that I do. I cannot remember the time when I did not love you. It is my love for you that strengthens my resolution never to risk your coming to any humiliation through me," she

said. And as she spoke her voice sank into faintness, her cheeks grew pale, and tears welled up to her eyes.

Perceiving these signs of softening, the father and son renewed their entreaties that she should yield her judgment to theirs, but without effect.

Then Col. Pryor went over to where Godfrey and Jemima were doing host and hostess' duty to the company, and singling out Mr. Melville, he led him aside and told him the situation, and requested him to go over and join his persuasions to those of his son and himself to induce Zenobia to yield to their wishes.

"If I were not absolutely certain of the devoted affection that unites these two young people, I should not urge their marriage. But the girl is possessed of a morbid fancy, the result, no doubt, of the nervous shock she received yesterday, and it governs her. She has the greatest confidence in you as a moral guide. Do come and see what you can do with her."

"I will try," said the pastor, "but I warn you that I have little hope of success. Delicate creatures like Zenobia, when they take a stand on principle, are as immovable as the everlasting hills."

They went up to Zenobia.

"Zenobia, my dear, I have told Mr. Melville all about your scruples. Will you, in fairness to Oliver, hear what he has to say on this subject?" inquired the colonel.

"I shall be very grateful to Mr. Melville for any counsel he may condescend to give me, and, moreover, I shall be very happy if he can convince me that it is my duty to marry my betrothed under the present circumstances. But," she added, with a sigh, "I fear that is quite impossible."

The minister sat down beside her, and began his plea for Oliver. He talked long and well—plausibly, but fruitlessly. When he had said all that it was possible to say in favor of an immediate marriage, he stopped

for want of further arguments; and then Col. Pryor took up the cause again.

But Zenobia raised her hand and silently pleaded for peace. Then she said:

"I am driven to extremity to convince you that I am now immovable in my resolution." She drew a golden cross from her bosom and continued: "Mr. Melville, you venerate this sacred symbol, I am sure."

The minister bowed assent.

"You know that when I make a vow upon it I shall keep it. Now, then, I vow, upon this sign of our salvation, that I will never marry until all doubt as to my parentage shall be cleared up." With these words she pressed her lips to the cross, and then replaced it in her bosom.

"I told you so," whispered the pastor to the colonel.

A deep groan burst from the bosom of Oliver.

Zenobia heard it, and turned to him with a smile.

"Come, my knight and lover! I lay on you a task to perform for my sake, such as, in the chivalric ages, ladies laid on their suitors. You shall go and discover my family. Then, if they shall be found worthy of your alliance, my Oliver, then my knight and lover shall become my lord and monarch!" And with such an adoring smile she held out her hand to him that he caught it and pressed it to his lips, and with a burst of youthful enthusiasm exclaimed:

"I will! I will! I will undertake the duty you have assigned me, my love and my queen! And, God helping me, I will accomplish it."

So there was no wedding that evening.

The friends being informed of the resolution Zenobia had taken, differed in their views regarding it. Some, especially the women, highly approved it; others, especially the men, demurred at it. As the evening was clear and mild for the season, the guests remained with

their friends until a late hour, and then departed, with many good wishes for the family.

Godfrey and Jemima gave up their wedding trip, and determined to remain quietly at The Notches with Zenobia, while Col. Pryor and Oliver should go to Washington, with the forlorn hope of getting some information concerning the De Leon family from the Spanish legation.

Afterward the newly married pair would remove to Mistyrock, and make their home with old Dr. Bland.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

It was late on a blustering March night when Col. Pryor and his son reached the railway station at Washington. They got off, portmanteaus in hand, and walked briskly through the buffeting wind to the Metropolitan Hotel. Arrived there, they ordered a light supper, engaged a room, and soon after retired to bed.

They were both early risers, so, before any of the other guests were astir, they were up and dressed.

Oliver, to whom the city was a novelty, walked out for a stroll along Pennsylvania Avenue before breakfast. Col. Pryor, not quite recovered from the fatigue of the journey, walked into the reading room, which was quite empty at this hour, and sat down at the long central table, on which the morning papers had already been laid. He had just taken up one of them, and was unfolding it, when he was startled by a loud cry, and, looking up, saw, rushing toward him, a gigantic negro, with his arms thrown up above his head, gesticulating wildly.

Thinking himself in the presence of some furious madman, Col. Pryor sprang upon the table, seized the chair on which he had been sitting, and brandished it before him. That did not dismay the assailant in the least. He dashed forward and seized the colonel around the legs, crying out:

"Oh, Marse Co'n'l, done yer know me? I'se Ben! Ben Godf'ey, yer know! Oh, Marse Co'n'l, sah, done yer kno' poor Ben?"

The chair in the colonel's hand, which had come within a hair's breath of crashing down with destruc-

tive force on the negro's head, was stayed in its course.

"Ben?" exclaimed the colonel, in perplexity.

"Yes, Marse Co'n'l, honey! Poor Ben, w'at yer buyed, an' w'at dat mis'ble w'ite trash nigger buyer stoled 'way f'om yer. Oh, Marse Co'n'l, honey, try ter memorize po' Ben!" cried the giant baby, beginning to snivel.

Col. Pryor put down the chair, descended from his citadel, and grasped the great hand of the negro, whose face was streaming with tears, and said:

"Why, Ben, my poor fellow! Where have you been all these long years?"

"Oh, Marse Co'n'l, honey, I'se been a long dis'ance f'om yer.

"'Ober de water an' fur 'way,'

as de cat'chism say. Oh! I'se so glad ter see yer, Marse Co'n'l. How's po' Servy?"

"Servia is well. She is living at The Notches, with my family."

"T'ank de Lor'! Oh, t'ank de Lor'!"

"Where did you come from last, Ben?"

"F'm Cadiz, Marse Co'n'l, 'long wid my new marse, Done Gaspar de Leon."

"De Leon! De Leon! How? What? Ben! Ben! What are you talking about?" exclaimed the colonel, in strong agitation.

"Lor', Marse Co'n'l, doane take on so. My young marse aine arter no harm. He done come ober yere ter search fer his little sister, Snowby, w'at Servy sabed, yer 'member. How is she, Marse Co'n'l? Did yer raise dat chile, sah? Is her libbin' yet?"

"Yes, yes! But, for God's sake, Ben, explain yourself!" exhorted the colonel, trembling with emotion, as he dropped into a chair and wiped his face.

The rambling tale the honest negro told in his own

dialect had best be condensed and rendered in English; nor need those parts of his adventures with which we are already acquainted be repeated. We will take up the story from the time of the storm which had proved fatal to Wharton, the "Jonah" of the ship.

From the night of Wharton's tragic death, poor Ben, who had no sort of suspicion of his own unconscious share in bringing it about, still reproached himself for having harangued so dismally on the misdeeds of the man who had met such an awful fate.

"I mout a lef' it ter de Lor'," he said, again and again. "I had no call ter be a judgin' ob sinners."

Happily for him, he never found out that the sailors had thrown Wharton overboard, as the Jonah for whom the sea raged, and whose sacrifice only could appease its fury, and who ever after believed that the calm which immediately fell was in consequence of their offering. Poor Ben firmly believed that his tyrannical owner had fallen overboard while drunk, as had been reported by the crew.

When, at length, the ship reached port, and the crew engaged for the voyage was paid off, and discharged, to spend their wages, for the most part, in riotous living, the captain, who had taken a fancy to Ben, engaged him as a cook, in port and at sea, for an indefinite time. After that Ben made many voyages to various parts of the world. He constantly carried one treasure with him, tied with a strong string around his neck, and worn next to his faithful heart. This was the little bone crucifix given him by the child Zenobia, and which he regarded with the deepest veneration as a relic that would save him from fire and flood, and thieves, and from all accidents, dangers and disasters by sea or land. He was so careful of it, that before each string would be worn weak with use he would renew it. When he had saved money enough he bought a

little silver chain, on which he fastened it around his neck, securely wearing it as before, next his heart.

So, for all the years he had been lost to his few friends and his native country, Ben led a wandering, seafaring life, not without profit and interest and adventure; which, however, have nothing to do with this story, until the last and most significant event of his life abroad.

While his ship was in port at Cadiz, his old captain was about to sell out and retire. Ben's occupation as ship's cook was over. He was stopping at a small tavern in the lower part of the city, and meditating, in his rambling manner, on what he should do next, when he thought of his sacred relic, with an impression that it might help him in some way out of his present dilemma. And it did!

He had drawn the crucifix from his bosom, and was holding it before his face, gazing at it and talking to it as was his singular habit, when his strange conduct attracted the attention of a young man who was passing at the time. The stranger stopped, and, in compassion, spoke to him.

"What is the matter, my poor man?" he inquired, in his native tongue.

Ben, who understood but little Spanish, and could speak less, answered him in his own dialect:

"Oh, nuffin' much. I was on'l consultin' ob my holy relic."

And as he spoke he turned the crucifix toward the inquirer.

"*Madre de Dios!* How came you by that?" exclaimed the man, starting and falling into a tremor as his eye fell on the relic.

Ben, frightened for the safety of his treasure, hastily hid it in his bosom, and earnestly assured the young

man that he had not stolen it; that it had been given to him by a sweet little angel whom his own friend had saved out of a shipwreck.

The young man grew still more agitated. But as he could not understand much of Ben's dialect, or make him understand much of his own Spanish tongue, it was difficult for them to come to any conclusion. But the young man at last made the negro understand that he had nothing at all to fear, but that he must come with him. Ben obeyed, with the habitual and constitutional docility of his nature.

The stranger took the negro to a fine old country house about three miles out of town, and immediately into the presence of an aged couple, who proved to be his grandparents; and then, in a hurried and excited manner told the story of his accidental meeting with the negro, and his recognition of the relic, which he thought would prove to be a sure clew to the discovery of their long-lost grandchild.

Poor Ben, gentle, timid, half frightened, half doubtful whether he might not be hanged for having the relic in his possession, and not understanding all that was going on around him, stood trembling, and wishing himself back in his old captain's ship.

By eager endeavor and steady perseverance, they at length gained from the negro, who was willing enough to tell them all he knew as well as he could through his poor English and mutilated Spanish, the story of the wreck of the *Errand Girl* and the rescue of the little Spanish child by the mulatto woman, Servia, who was afterward sold to Col. Pryor, of a place called The Notches, in the mountains of Virginia, and who carried her off, together with the rescued child, to his home.

After so much had been learned, no time was lost before it was decided that young Don Gaspar should

sail for the United States, accompanied by Ben, to assist him in the search for the missing child.

And in a week from that day they were on their voyage for New York, which they had reached only the day before Col. Pryor and his son set off for Washington. They started immediately for the national capital, where they arrived that morning.

"An' ef dere's any more yer'd like ter know, Marse Co'n'l, yer p'ease jes' ax my new young marse," concluded Ben.

" Amost marvelous coincidence, or a most wonderful Providence!" mused the colonel.

"Where is the young gentleman now?" he inquired.

"He hav' jes' took a baff an' gone off ter de barber. 'Spects he be in here soon," replied Ben.

But before the words were verified by the appearance of the young Spaniard, Oliver came in from his promenade.

The colonel hastened to meet him, and led him to their private apartment, for the reading room was beginning to fill up, and was no longer a proper place for confidential communications. There the colonel imparted to his son all he had learned from the negro Ben.

"Now, God be thanked!" exclaimed the young man, when he had recovered from his astonishment.

"And now we will go down and get some breakfast, Noll, and by that time we shall be able to meet this young fellow, who seems to be the elder brother of our Zenobia, whose aged grandparents are anxiously waiting in Cadiz for news of their granddaughter, of whose recovery they have so long despaired."

The father and son went down to the breakfast room, took seats provided for them, and gave their orders. Yet both were too much excited by what they had heard to do justice to the good things set before them. After a hasty meal, they were rising from the table, to

go out and seek the young Spaniard, when a card was brought by a waiter and handed to Col. Pryor.

GASPAR DE LEON

CASA SAN PEDRO,
CADIZ, SPAIN

"Where is the gentleman?" inquired the colonel, of the waiter.

"In the gentlemen's parlor, if you please, sir," replied the man, with a bow.

"Pray say to him that I will wait on him immediately," said the colonel.

The man went off with the message.

Col. Pryor went back to his room, touched up his toilet a trifle, and then proceeded to the gentlemen's parlor, for his momentous interview with the young foreigner.

Fortunately for their meeting, the place was deserted by all, with the exception of young Gaspar.

As Col. Pryor entered, the young man rose and came gracefully forward to meet him.

The first thing that Col. Pryor noticed in the stranger was his striking likeness to Zenobia. He seemed about twenty-five years of age; was of medium height, slender form, very dark complexion, with classic features, large, brilliant, eloquent black eyes, curling black

hair and mustache, with a graceful carriage and manners.

"The señor, Col. Pryor, I beg to presume," he said, with sweet gravity and deference.

"Yes, sir; at your service. I am very happy to see you, sir," heartily replied the colonel.

"It becomes my pride and delight to meet one whom I have crossed the ocean to see, and to whom I and my family owe a debt of gratitude too great ever to be canceled," solemnly declared the young Spaniard.

"You credit me with imaginary benefits, sir. Indeed you owe me nothing," said the colonel.

"Ah, speak not so. The good Beneto tells me that you have reared my little sister, the little seaflower cast upon your shores."

"The angel child of whom you speak has been the angel of our lives. And I hope she will continue to be the light of our home," gravely replied the colonel, though with some misgiving, for the thought occurred to him that this young Spaniard might possibly oppose the marriage of his beautiful, high-born sister with the son of a plain Virginia planter like himself. But the next words of young Gaspar set his doubts at rest.

"She would be most ungrateful did she fail in that duty," he said.

"But I should explain to you, sir, that not I, but a lady of rank, a widow, who was my neighbor, brought up the young señorita as her own daughter."

"Ah! So? And yet she is with you?"

"Since her foster mother's death, some months ago, yes."

"Will the señor colonel give some account of the rescue and adoption of the child?" politely inquired Gaspar.

Col. Pryor bowed and complied with the request, telling the history of Zenobia, as we already know it, omitting only any allusion to the cruel and degrading fraud

perpetrated by the slave trader, Wharton, in passing her off as a slave child of Servia, and selling her as such. For he deemed that not only useless, but injudicious, to relate. Nor did he mention the cruel persecutions of Murdok Horah.

Then Don Gaspar, on his part, took up the discourse, to satisfy Col. Pryor's natural but unspoken curiosity in respect to the family history of his beautiful and beloved protégée.

"The present representatives of the family of De Leon," he said, "were the aged couple, Don Antonio and Donna Dorothea, the grandparents of himself and Zenobia. They had had but one son, the Don Lorenzo, who was subsequently lost in the wreck of the *Errand Girl*. He and Zenobia were the only children of Don Lorenzo, he being about twelve years his sister's senior; and they were, therefore, the only heirs of their father and grandparents. The De Leon estate was not large, he said, but his sister was entitled to a share of it. The voyage that had proved so fatal to his parents had been undertaken as a mere matter of pleasure. They had gone at first from Cadiz to Havana, thence to Charleston, and thence to Baltimore, and were on their trip from that city to Washington when the fatal wreck occurred that terminated their lives."

An hour later Oliver was introduced to his future brother-in-law, and the betrothal of the young pair was announced, but without any allusion to the interrupted wedding.

The prospective wedding met with no opposition from Don Gaspar. The only thing he suggested was that the young couple should immediately after the ceremony sail for Cadiz and spend their honeymoon with the old grandparents at San Pedro.

As soon as possible, after the interview with the young Spaniard, Oliver wrote to Zenobia, relating all that had occurred in the unexpected success of their

quest, when two seekers from opposite directions met by accident at the same hotel.

Meanwhile Col. Pryor had a second interview with Ben, and had gladdened that faithful creature's heart by telling him of the marriage between Ben's beloved young master, Gilbert Godfrey, and the colonel's niece, Jemima, and also of the better prospects of the Godfrey brothers, who by unflinching industry and self-denial had nearly paid off all their family debts and lifted nearly all the mortgages from the old farm.

That very night the whole party, consisting of Col. Pryor, Oliver, Don Gaspar and Ben, took the train for Virginia.

They reached the railway station at Halfdown by dusk, and found two carriages waiting for them that had been telegraphed for. A drive of two hours brought them to The Notches, where Godfrey, Jemima and Zenobia were waiting impatiently to receive them.

We will not linger over the joyousness of the meeting, or dwell on the delight of the long-severed brother and sister, or the earnest efforts of Don Gaspar to awaken some memory of himself in the mind of his sister, whom as a child he remembered so well. At length his efforts seemed blessed with success, for Zenobia fancied that she did remember some of the striking incidents of her childhood that he tried to recall to her mind.

"I will bring all the past before you before I have done. And when you see the old place, it will help you to recollect," he said to her on one occasion.

Young Don Gaspar, in recognition of Ben's services in the recovery of Zenobia, bought up all the mortgages of the Godfrey estate and gave them to Ben to do with them as he pleased, thinking that the negro would take great pride and pleasure in presenting them to the brothers whom he still delighted to call his dear young masters.

But Ben, with more delicacy than anyone who did not know him would have ever given him credit for, said:

"No, young Marse Señor! No, sah! Ef yer wan' ter do me a great comp'ment, jes yer make Miss Jim a p'easant ob dem ar, an' dat'll be jes de same wid gibbin' dem ter Marse Gilbert, an' all de same wid gibbin' dem ter Marse Gideon. 'Ca'se, yer see, man an' wife is one. An' dem two brudders hab de int'est in de ole home 'tween dem. Yes, sah!"

And so the business was finally settled.

Within a few days after the arrival of Don Gaspar at The Notches, where he was an honored guest, there was another morning gathering of friends in the old long parlor to witness the marriage of Oliver Pryor and Zenobia de Leon. On this occasion there was no unseemly interruption of the ceremony.

After the benediction, the kisses and the congratulations, Col. Pryor gave Zenobia the deed of Servia's manumission, for her to give it to her rescuer and faithful maid, explaining that it was the wish of the late Mrs. Horah that Servia should not receive it until Zenobia's wedding was over.

Servia took it with tears of gratitude, but expressed a wish to remain with Mrs. Pryor for life. Her wish was granted, and she was engaged to go with them on their wedding trip as waiting maid.

The company adjourned into the old square dining room, where the wedding feast was set. And after, as was the custom of the place, the wedding cake had been cut, and the pieces had been distributed, and the hidden ring found—by Miss Melville, as it happened—and toasts had been drunk, and speeches made and answered, and everything else concluded according to custom, the newly married pair changed their bridal dresses for traveling suits, and in a few minutes later took leave of their friends, and departed on their journey, accompanied by Don Gaspar, who was to take

them to Spain and introduce them to the aged grandparents at Cadiz.

Godfrey and Jemima, having been balked of their wedding trip in the first instance, determined to have it now.

One day, soon after the departure of Zenobia and Oliver, old Dr. Bland happened to call, and inquired:

"By the way, Pryor, what has become of that fellow?"

"You mean Celia's son?"

"Yes."

"I have heard nothing of him since I sent him in charge of his mother over to Horah Hall. And I wish to hear nothing of him. 'Let sleeping dogs lie!' is a good proverb. I have advertised for the next of kin of the Horah family, for Heaven knows I can't tell how otherwise to find them, but no answer has come to any of my advertisements."

Soon after this conversation it was ascertained that the man whom we have known as Murdok Horah had run away, carrying all the valuables in the way of plate that he could turn into money. And everybody who knew Nat Pryor will fully believe that he was glad of the event.

Some days still later, all the negroes who had been hidden in the caves so long came back to Horah Hall, and went to work as if they had never been away.

Col. Pryor found them on his first visit to the place, after the flight of Celia's son.

They crowded around him, laughing and making a joke of their escape and return, saying:

"We doane mine you, Marse Nat! We runned 'way f'om him! An' now—kik-kik-kik—he's runn'd 'way f'om eberybody!"

Celia was there, too, looking aged and haggard beyond her years, but keeping her cottage and tending her poultry yard as before.

Col. Pryor commended their industry, and told them

to work the place as well as they possibly could, and that to encourage them he would give them a share of the profits of the crops, out of which they might provide for their own wants. This arrangement highly delighted the negroes, who immediately raised three cheers for "Ole Marse!"

Experience proved that this plan worked so well that Col. Pryor put it in operation on his own plantation with equally good effect.

At the proper time Gilbert Godfrey went up to Charlottesville and took his degree, and then returned and settled at Mistyrock, as Dr. Bland's partner. And gradually, as the old man grew older, and the young one more popular, he assumed more and more the heat and burden of the practice.

Jemima kept house. And the young couple became as son and daughter to the old physician.

Oliver and Zenobia's visit to Spain was extended to six months, and even at the end of that time it was only by promising to return every year that they could get away from the old grandparents, who had formed a strong attachment to them.

Their return to The Notches in midsummer was the signal for a season of jubilee throughout the neighborhood. Fêtes were given in their honor everywhere. And what added to the general joy was that Maj. Abbace, after a successful suppression of the Indian uprising, got leave at last, and with his second wife came down to Virginia to visit his daughter and son-in-law.

* * * * * * * *

Horah Hall has fallen almost into ruin. The advertisements for the next of kin, after having continued for some months, brought forth a few false claimants, as all such notices are sure to do, but these, on being

investigated, proved to be fraudulent, and were dismissed by the court.

The fighting of false claimants on the legal battlefield cost a considerable amount of money, which further wasted the decaying estate. The negroes belonging to the place worked it faithfully, living meanwhile in their huts, but the "house," as it was called, began to crumble away, as all deserted houses must.

After the Emancipation, the younger negroes, inspired by ambition and love of adventure, left the place for the large cities—notably for Washington, where freed men "most do congregate."

The elder ones remained on the land, making a scanty living from the half-worn-out soil.

Ben attached himself to Godfrey and Jemima, and is often heard to declare that he will "nebber 'mancipate his young marse an' mis' as long as he libs! Nebber!"

And "Poor Jack!" He deserves some notice. Ah, me! Our four-footed fellow creatures suffer much from the hands of their "false gods," which those same false gods may have to answer for bitterly some day when they shall be called to account by Him without whom not a sparrow shall fall to the ground.

"Poor Jack" came to grief at last, in this world, at least! When Zenobia was about to start on her wedding trip, she took a very loving leave of her faithful dog, hugged and gave him a cake to divert his attention. And she charged everyone, from her father-in-law, Col. Pryor, down to little Otto, to take care of Poor Jack, and to be very, very good to him during her absence. And all promised, and kept their promises. But Poor Jack pined, refused to eat, looked in everybody's eyes with piteous, inquiring gaze, and took to wandering about the neighborhood in search of that dear mistress whose absence was such a sorrowful mystery to him. One day a brutal biped into whose premises he had strayed struck him a stunning blow on the head, and

"Poor Jack" fell down and fell asleep, and woke up in the happy hunting grounds, where in dreams he meets his dear mistress often.

When Zenobia heard of his fate, she grieved and could be only comforted by her peculiar belief in the souls and in the immortality of all animals.

No certain news has ever been heard of the so-called Murdok Horah. Reports have come that he has been recognized among a most desperate band of border ruffians. But those who know the man, and his lack of physical courage, doubt the rumor.

THE END.

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